Results Matter: Improving Preschool Outcomes for Children with Disabilities



Multilingual Learners

The purpose of this publication is to showcase preschool special education practices that support positive outcomes for children with disabilities and their families across Colorado's schools, districts, and Administrative Units. More than six decades of research demonstrate that children flourish in inclusive environments, particularly when they learn alongside non-disabled peers in general education preschool classrooms.

These practice profiles build on evidence-based approaches to enhance Preschool Outcomes, offering practical strategies and guidance for establishing a strong foundation of high-quality learning for children with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs).

Program Spotlight

The Eagle County School District (ECSD) Early Childhood Program is a blended, center-based program that includes Head Start, Colorado Universal Preschool, Early Childhood Special Education, and traditional preschool programming. Recognizing the importance of early childhood experiences on school success, ECSD continues to take an active role in fully integrating early childhood programs into the district.

For Multilingual Learners (MLs) who are suspected of having a disability, families are centered throughout the screening and evaluation process. The multidisciplinary team gathers information about the child's cultural and linguistic background through interviews and engagement in the family's preferred language. Families are invited to share videos of their child doing something they enjoy, participating in daily routines, reading a book, and demonstrating any areas of concern. Home visits are available based on family preference or transportation needs.

The team then conducts a Transdisciplinary Play-Based Assessment (TPBA), reviewing all forms and interviews to plan the play observation and determine any additional assessment activities needed for a comprehensive evaluation. At the conclusion of the appointment, the team prepares a written summary of findings and reviews it with the family. Eligibility for special education is determined collaboratively with the family at that time.

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ECSD enrolls children into the preschool following the play-based assessment and eligibility decision. Children are able to start at an agreed upon time with families and paperwork is supported by staff. The IEP is then developed within 30 days with the classroom teacher and special education team that will be providing services to the child. This gives the child's educational staff the time and opportunity to get to know the child and family for a meaningful IEP meeting.

Results Matter (RM) data is a valuable resource for progress monitoring and provides teachers and families with reliable information about the developmental growth of children who are Multilingual Learners. ECSD uses initial evaluation data to establish baseline ratings for children with an IEP, ensuring that progress is measured accurately over time. Family input, along with the universal screening tool *IPT Early Childhood (Individual Proficiency Test)* used with all children, informs the Home Language Survey and supports the progress in the Language Acquisition Objectives within the RM online assessment.

Using Like-Peer comparative data within the RM assessment helps teams build a meaningful body of evidence for individual learners. This information supports discussions about a child's progress, attainment of IEP goals, and whether the child continues to require special education services or may be ready for re-evaluation and transition to general education based on the data and an IEP team decision.

Inclusive preschool settings in Colorado can establish and sustain environments that invite, welcome, and promote multilingual children's language development and learning. ECSD is committed to smooth transitions for families of all children.



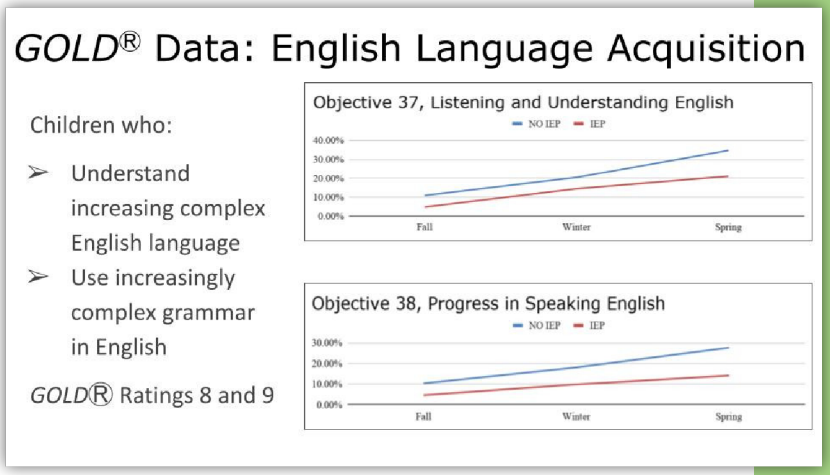
Building a language profile to guide culturally and linguistically responsive decisions in special education assessment and progress monitoring requires strong collaboration among special education providers, families, and preschool general education partners. When a young Multilingual Learner (ML) shows an area of concern in development, using a Like-Peer Comparison process helps track their progress in relation to peers with similar demographic and linguistic backgrounds. Comparing MLs to similar peers leads to more accurate interpretations of children's learning and play, and it equips educators to make informed, child-centered decisions that support improved outcomes.

Practices that Contribute to Improving Outcomes

Developing the IEP
Once it is determined that a child requires Specially Designed Instruction, the team develops an actionable IEP in which the Present Levels clearly describe how the child's language needs influence their development and learning within the classroom environment. The individualized goals and services will reflect how the unique needs of the child will be addressed, including support for multilingualism.

Progress Monitoring with Results Matter The educational team ensures that accurate entry of information regarding English proficiency from the initial evaluation process is entered into the RM online assessment tool as teachers should assess children's progress in acquiring English (Espinosa, 2009). To accomplish this, a home language survey is filled out and, in the case of *GOLD*® by Teaching Strategies, Objectives 37 and 38 will be activated for the purpose of progress monitoring English language acquisition.

Specially Designed Instruction with Language Support in Mind
Early childhood teachers intentionally promote children's acquisition of English. When introducing English to children in an early childhood program, it is important to implement an additive model of language acquisition (supporting both English and the children's home languages), not a subtractive model (substituting English for the home languages) (García, 2003). For children with disabilities, strategies that an individual child may need to access and participate in the classroom should be explicitly documented in the IEP and implemented in the classroom.



How can we use the data?

When Language Acquisition data is collected by programs, it can be used in Like-Peer Comparisons when other criteria are met to identify other children who share a set of similar demographic and developmental characteristics.

The Like-Peer Comparative Data process provides meaningful insights to support educators in analyzing data for MLs.

Core Components: Like-Peer Comparative Data

Develop a plan to analyze child data to answer priority questions with the goal of improving services for children and families.

- Use Like-Peer Comparative Data during the problem-solving process for Multilingual Learners in preschool to provide information about language acquisition and growth.
- Analyze the characteristics of children and families currently enrolled in the program.
- Identify the amount of each type of service (e.g., frequency, intensity, total hours) that children receive.
- Determine the percentage of children who leave Early Childhood Special Education because they are no longer eligible (i.e., services are deemed no longer necessary).

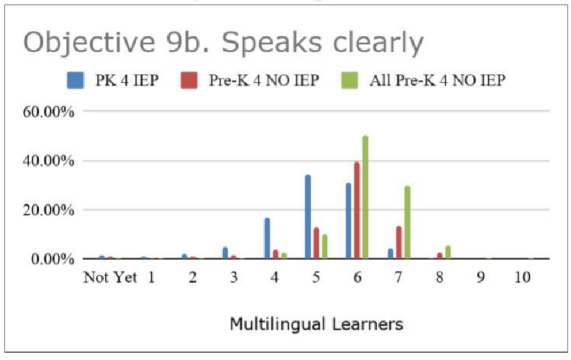
Identify Like-Peers using GOLD® for universal screening.

- Support staff to engage families meaningfully as partners, conducting informal interviews to gather anecdotal data about the child's use of language.
- Develop a protocol at the program level to ensure accuracy across all children.
- Use a Home Language Survey (HLS) with all students as a universal screener, enter results into the *GOLD*® HLS to enable the English language acquisition objectives for children who are identified as MLs.
- Gather data from all available sources for *GOLD*® Objectives 37 and 38 (English Language Acquisition).

Implement the criteria for a child to be a Like-Peer.

- Use the 6 essential criteria to identify Like-Peers:
  - Similar age in months
  - Within the same Colored Band in *GOLD*®
  - *GOLD*® Home Language Survey results and proficiency levels in Objectives 37 & 38
  - Classroom composition (mixed age group, 3-year-olds only, 4-year-olds only, etc.)
  - Language Instruction Educational Program - including native language support within the classroom
  - Hours in program per week
- Additional Considerations:
  - Months in program
  - Out of home caregiver language
  - Birth order
  - Mobility
  - Gender
  - Disability status

GOLD® Data Expressing Ideas and Needs



Getting Started: Like-Peer Comparative Data in Early Childhood Special Education

Identify the child in question

- What are the strengths and needs of the child in the classroom related to accessing learning?

Collect Essential Criteria

- Gather and review all existing data
- Ensure completeness and accuracy of data

Identify the Like-Peers

- Use the collected criteria to find similar children within the same school/district
- If 5–10 peers are unavailable, use as many as possible while maintaining similar characteristics

Collaborate between general and special education to gather data

- Identify the specific area of concern
- Monitor progress of the child and 5 to 10 Like-Peers
- Track data consistently over time
- Use the same measures or tools

Calculate rate of growth

Plot the data on graphs

- Side-by-side comparison using scaled scores
- Include systems-level local normative data if available to provide broader context

Compare how the child performs relative to these expectations and the Like-Peer group

- Compare performance in relevant domains to the concern and to that of the Like-Peer group

Conduct a collaborative analysis

- Bring together a multidisciplinary team to interpret trends, explore contextual factors, and rule out assumptions

Make Data-Driven Statements

- Use the data to make clear, evidence-based statements about the child's development and learning

Measuring Progress

Improving child outcomes involves working with data relevant to children and families that promotes inclusion and shows progress in routines. Data culture is a part of the fabric of what we do, data helps us tell the story.

Critical Question

- How do outcomes for children differ between service-delivery models?

Indicators:

- Multilingual children learn language and culture through their experiences at home, in the community and in early care and education.
- All children develop language through play-based activities that invite rich language interaction.
- The languages used by multilingual children and their families are integrated into every day routines and activities in the regular classroom.

Resource Highlights

Colorado Department of Education. (n.d.). *Linguistically responsive data-based instructional decision-making for K–12 multilingual learners.* https://ed.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/resources/guidance/linguistically-responsive-data-based-instructional-decision-making

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Results Matter improves outcomes for Colorado's preschool children who receive special education services by helping teachers, administrators, families, and other education partners use authentic assessment data to inform classroom instruction as well as program and policy decision-making.