

Measuring Children's Outcomes in Early Childhood Special Education

Office of Special Services and Inclusive Education

September 24, 2025

Today's Topics in the Child Outcomes Summary (COS) Process

Why COS Matters

- Purpose: What we report, when and how (valid, reliable, required)
- Understanding child outcomes

How the Process Works

- Observation, Teaming, Rating
- Tools that support decision-making

Why COS?

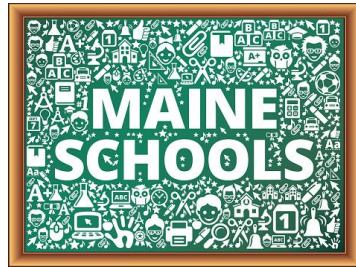
- Ensures we are measuring children's progress in meaningful ways
- Provides data for decision-making at the classroom, program and state levels
- Meets federal reporting requirements
- Shows if resources and instruction are making a difference for children and families

COS Purpose: Measuring Progress for Educational Benefit

- The purpose of COS is not just paperwork – it's about showing progress and ensuring resources are truly benefiting children.
- States use this information to see how children in our programs are progressing.
- Federally reported data shows whether funding for early childhood special education is making a difference for children and families



COS Federal Requirements



ROI

Three Outcome Areas

**Outcome 1:
Positive
Social-
Emotional
Skills**

(including social relationships)

**Outcome 2:
Acquisition
and Use of
Knowledge
and Skills**

**Outcome 3:
Use of
Appropriate
Behaviors to
Meet Needs**

Comparing the changes children demonstrate between entering the preschool special education program and exiting from it

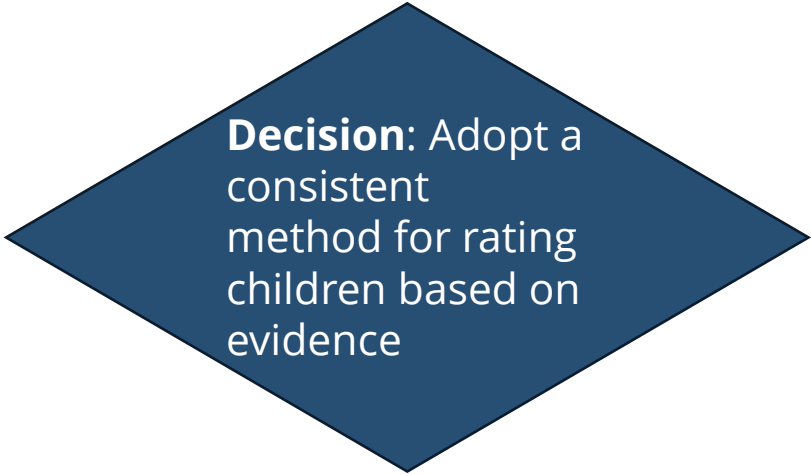
For Which Children Will Data Be Reported?

- Approximately 50% of children exit the preschool program from year to year (national average).
- In Maine, for SY 2024-2025:
 - **6159** preschool-aged children enrolled over the course of the school year
 - **3065** children exited from preschool to Kindergarten (or left special education, or moved)



Major Activities in the COS Process

1. Forming a team
2. Ongoing collection of performance data (observations, assessments, and other tools)
3. Compare the child's current functional skills to age-expected skills and behaviors
4. Assigning a rating through team discussion and decision
5. Submitting entry and exit data to the SEA



Decision: Adopt a consistent method for rating children based on evidence

Primary Tools of the COS Process



- List of what is assessed (three outcome areas)

ecta the Center for Early Childhood Assessment
 Child Outcomes Summary (COS) Definitions:
 7-Point Rating Scale Criteria
 (updated June 2015) — Available in Spanish — <https://thecenter.org/assessment/cos/>

Overall Age-Expected Functioning
Rating Definition
7 Child functions in ways that are age-expected in all or almost all everyday situations that are part of the child's life. The child meets or exceeds all age-expected skills and behaviors in the outcome area.
6 Child functions generally in ways that are age-expected, but there are some significant concerns about the child's functioning in the outcome area. Although age-expected, the child's functioning may be lower on some measures than age-expected.
5 Child functions in ways that are age-expected in some situations, but there are significant concerns about the child's functioning in the outcome area. Although age-expected, the child's functioning may be lower on some measures than age-expected.
4 Child consistently uses age-expected skills across settings and situations in the outcome area. Some functioning is not age-expected but is age-expected.
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- Rating Scale (1-7 scale)

Outcome 1: Positive Social Emotional Skills	Outcome 2: Acquisition and Use of Knowledge and Skills	Outcome 3: Use of Appropriate Behaviors to Meet Needs
7 Child functions in ways that are age-expected in all or almost all everyday situations that are part of the child's life. The child meets or exceeds all age-expected skills and behaviors in the outcome area. 6 Child functions generally in ways that are age-expected, but there are some significant concerns about the child's functioning in the outcome area. Although age-expected, the child's functioning may be lower on some measures than age-expected. 5 Child functions in ways that are age-expected in some situations, but there are significant concerns about the child's functioning in the outcome area. Although age-expected, the child's functioning may be lower on some measures than age-expected. 4 Child consistently uses age-expected skills across settings and situations in the outcome area. Some functioning is not age-expected but is age-expected. 3 Child consistently uses age-expected skills across settings and situations in the outcome area. Some functioning is not age-expected but is age-expected. 2 Child consistently uses age-expected skills across settings and situations in the outcome area. Some functioning is not age-expected but is age-expected. 1 Child consistently uses age-expected skills across settings and situations in the outcome area. Some functioning is not age-expected but is age-expected.	7 Child functions in ways that are age-expected in all or almost all everyday situations that are part of the child's life. The child meets or exceeds all age-expected skills and behaviors in the outcome area. 6 Child functions generally in ways that are age-expected, but there are some significant concerns about the child's functioning in the outcome area. Although age-expected, the child's functioning may be lower on some measures than age-expected. 5 Child functions in ways that are age-expected in some situations, but there are significant concerns about the child's functioning in the outcome area. Although age-expected, the child's functioning may be lower on some measures than age-expected. 4 Child consistently uses age-expected skills across settings and situations in the outcome area. Some functioning is not age-expected but is age-expected. 3 Child consistently uses age-expected skills across settings and situations in the outcome area. Some functioning is not age-expected but is age-expected. 2 Child consistently uses age-expected skills across settings and situations in the outcome area. Some functioning is not age-expected but is age-expected. 1 Child consistently uses age-expected skills across settings and situations in the outcome area. Some functioning is not age-expected but is age-expected.	7 Child functions in ways that are age-expected in all or almost all everyday situations that are part of the child's life. The child meets or exceeds all age-expected skills and behaviors in the outcome area. 6 Child functions generally in ways that are age-expected, but there are some significant concerns about the child's functioning in the outcome area. Although age-expected, the child's functioning may be lower on some measures than age-expected. 5 Child functions in ways that are age-expected in some situations, but there are significant concerns about the child's functioning in the outcome area. Although age-expected, the child's functioning may be lower on some measures than age-expected. 4 Child consistently uses age-expected skills across settings and situations in the outcome area. Some functioning is not age-expected but is age-expected. 3 Child consistently uses age-expected skills across settings and situations in the outcome area. Some functioning is not age-expected but is age-expected. 2 Child consistently uses age-expected skills across settings and situations in the outcome area. Some functioning is not age-expected but is age-expected. 1 Child consistently uses age-expected skills across settings and situations in the outcome area. Some functioning is not age-expected but is age-expected.

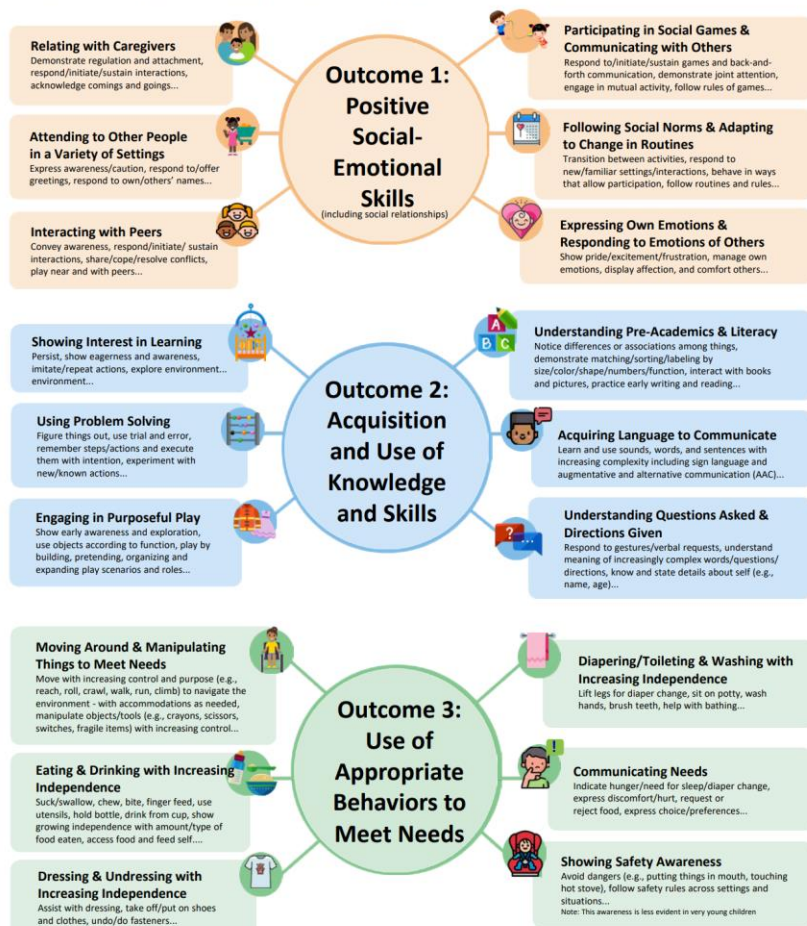
- Guides to typical development by age for comparison

Breadth of the Outcomes: Functional Skills

BREADTH OF THE THREE CHILD OUTCOMES

An accessible version of the content is available at <https://ectacenter.org/eco/pages/childoutcomes.asp>

The three child outcomes, measured by early intervention and early childhood special education systems, encompass functional skills and behaviors that are meaningful for a child's participation in everyday routines. They cut across developmental domains to represent the integrated nature of how children develop, learn, and thrive. The breadth of these outcomes provides a framework for describing and consistently measuring children's functional skills and behaviors across settings and situations.



Ratings in COS Process

Child Outcomes Summary (COS) Definitions: 7-Point Rating Scale Criteria

Updated June 28, 2024 — Available in Spanish — <https://ectacenter.org/eco/pages/cosform.asp>

Overall Age-Expected Functioning

Rating	Definition
--------	------------

- | | |
|---|--|
| 7 | Child functions in ways that are age-expected in all or almost all everyday situations that are part of the child's life. No one on the team has concerns about the child's functioning in this outcome area. |
| 6 | Child's functioning generally is considered age-expected, but there are some significant concerns about the child's functioning in this outcome area. Although age-expected, the child's functioning may border on not keeping pace with age expectations. |

Some Age-Expected Functioning

Rating	Definition
--------	------------

- | | |
|---|--|
| 5 | Child functions using a mix of skills, with more skills that are age-expected than not age-expected, across settings and situations in this outcome area. Child's functioning might be described as like that of a slightly younger child. |
| 4 | Child occasionally uses age-expected skills across settings and situations in this outcome area. More functioning is not age-expected than is age-expected. |

Not Yet Age-Expected Functioning

Rating	Definition
--------	------------

- | | |
|---|--|
| 3 | Child uses immediate foundational skills most or all of the time across settings and situations. Child does not yet function in ways that would be considered age-expected in this outcome area. Functioning might be described as like that of a younger child. |
| 2 | Child occasionally uses immediate foundational skills across settings and situations. Child does not yet function in ways that would be considered age-expected in this outcome area. More functioning reflects skills that are foundational than are immediate foundational. |
| 1 | Child only uses foundational skills across settings and situations. These foundational skills are crucial to build immediate foundational skills. Child does not yet function in ways that would be considered age-expected or immediate foundational in this outcome area. Child's functioning might be described as like that of a much younger child. |

Age-Expected Skills and Behaviors by Age Group

Outcome 1: Positive Social-Emotional Skills

(including social relationships)

Outcome 2: Acquisition and Use of Knowledge and Skills







Outcome 3: Use of Appropriate Behaviors to Meet Needs

Age-Anchoring Tool for Use with the Summary Process















Outcome 1: Positive Social-Emotional Skills Children demonstrate age-appropriate functioning by:	Outcome 2: Acquiring and Using Knowledge and Skills Children demonstrate age-appropriate functioning by:	Outcome 3: Taking Appropriate Action to Meet Needs Children demonstrate age-appropriate functioning by:
49-60 months	49-60 months	49-60 months
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognizing rules and is compliant with them most of the time • Working to combine things in unique ways to create productions from clay, sand, paper, blocks etc. • Asking for adult help as needed • Establishing special friendships that last over time. Socio dramatic play is cooperative and coordinated • Asking questions to understand what another person thinks or feels and asking why • Recognizing others' needs and giving assistance • Preferring to play with other children to playing alone except when involved in a project • Showing respect for property and rights of others by asking permission to use others' possessions • Engaging in cooperative play • No separation distress • Becoming demanding and resisting doing chores • Carrying on long conversations with friends related to a wide range of topics. Activities are planned together and can be quite complex • Creating own complex socio dramatic play themes, scenarios, and props with great attention to detail • Initiating appropriate tasks without being reminded • Attending during large group for ten minutes • Waiting for turn for adult attention 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stringing beads according to a pattern • Drawing a person with more than five parts • Verbalizing similarities and differences in people • Verbalizing opposite analogies • Sorting by shape and color • Dictating individual story book, familiar stories from books and experiences • Clapping syllables in name • Identifying some letter sounds • Verbally identifying the beginning sound of name • Identifying letters in first and last name • Verbally identifying signs in environment • Verbally identifying labels in classroom and home (cereal, names, calendar) • Using print forms in imaginary play (menu, lists, newspaper) • Responding to questions relating to story • Acting out stories from a book (Three Little Pigs) • Attending while being read to for 4 to 10 minutes • Showing interest in reading related activities, such as independently looking at a book or drawing pictures based on a story • Constructing complex structures with vertical, horizontal and symmetrical lines • Pretending to write following natural progression of left to right, top to bottom • Beginning to make real letters • Copying letters of first name and symbols • Giving 3, 5, 7 objects upon request 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wiping nose independently • Covering mouth and nose when coughing/sneezing • Washing and drying face • Brushing teeth (rinses and expels liquid) • Bathing without assistance • Demonstrating hand dominance-right or left • Drawing a person with six recognizable parts • Beginning to gallop • Demonstrating meal time skills including: setting table; using knife cut soft foods; holding glass while pouring milk; serving self; cleaning up spills without help • Making activity choices without teacher's help • Zipping zippers • Lacing shoes • Dressing and undressing independently, including front fastenings, requiring assistance with ties and back fastenings • Hopping in place on one foot three times without losing balance • Standing on one foot for three seconds • Jumping over objects 5 to 6 inches high; landing with feet together • Cutting a circle with a scissor • Completing a simple treasure hunt map • Telling others about events that happened in the past with support

Published Tools With an ECTA Crosswalk

2021–Present

-  [Assessment, Evaluation, and Programming System for Infants and Children—Third Edition \(AEPS-3\)](#)
-  [The Battelle Developmental Inventory—Third Edition \(BDI-3\)](#) 
-  [Developmental Profile—Fourth Edition \(DP-4\)](#)
-  [Early Childhood Development Chart—Third Edition](#)
-  [Measure of Engagement, Independence, and Social Relationships \(MEISR™\)](#)

2011–2020

- Adaptive Behavior Assessment System, Third Edition (ABAS-3)
 -  [Teacher/Daycare Provider Form \(Ages 2–5\)](#)
 -  [Parent/Primary Caregiver Form \(Ages 0–5\)](#)
- Brigance Diagnostic Inventory of Early Development III (IED-III)
 -  [Criterion-Referenced Tool](#)
 -  [Standardized Tool](#)
-  [Desired Results Developmental Profile \(2015\)](#)
-  [Developmental Assessment of Young Children \(DAYC-2\)](#) 
-  [Early Learning Scale](#)
-  [High/Scope COR Advantage](#)
-  [myIGDIs Profile of Preschool Learning and Development Readiness](#)
-  [Preschool Language Scale-5](#)
-  [Teaching Strategies GOLD \(TS GOLD\)](#) 
-  [Work Sampling System](#)

Additional Data Options for COS Process

Collaborative Process

- Entry COS (completed before the start of Part B Preschool services)
 - Data collected from initial evaluation, including input from family
 - Head Start
 - Early Intervention for ME,
- Exit COS (for children receiving services for at least 6 months immediately upon discharge of services)
 - Quarterly reports from all service providers
 - Annual reports
 - Anecdotal information (providers, family)
 - TSG, High Scope



Documenting Team Decisions

- When teams review children's progress in the three outcome areas:
 - Record results of the discussion
 - Document the evidence for ratings
 - Record information from published tools when used
- Capture decisions clearly: Record team ratings and evidence

Sample tools for IEP team use:

- [COS Team Note-taking Guide During Age-Anchoring Discussions](#)
- [COS Documentation Form for Team Decisions](#) - Sample downloadable file to record COS team documentation for entry or exit data

Family information on child's functioning (check all that apply):

- ☐ Received in IEP Team Meeting ☐ Collected Separately
☐ Incorporated into Assessment(s) ☐ Not Included

1. POSITIVE SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL SKILLS (INCLUDING SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS)

To answer the questions below, think about the child's functioning in these and closely related areas (as indicated by assessments, referenced in age-anchoring tools, and/or based on observations from individuals in close contact with the child):

- Relating to adults
- Relating to other children
- Following rules related to groups or interacting with others (if older than 18 months)

1a. To what extent does this child show age-appropriate functioning, across a variety of settings and situations, on this outcome? (Choose one number)

Overall Not Age-Appropriate				Overall Age-Appropriate		
Not Yet		Nearly		Somewhat		Completely
<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6	<input type="checkbox"/> 7

Supporting evidence for this outcome rating:

Age-appropriate functioning:

Concerns? ☐ No ☐ Yes (describe)

Immediate foundational skills/Functioning that is not yet age-appropriate:

Functioning that is not yet age appropriate or immediate foundational:

1b. (If Question 1a has been answered previously): Has the child shown **ANY** new skills or behaviors related to positive social-emotional skills (including positive social relationships) since the last outcomes summary? (Choose Yes or No)

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	1 → Describe progress:
<input type="checkbox"/> No	2

COS Professional Development

- LMS EnGine
 - Web-based
 - 8 PD hours
 - Targeted to open October 1st



Administrator Decision Points for COS

- Administrators will decide how their SAU conduct the COS process to determine entry and exit ratings:
 - What tools?
 - What teaming process?
 - What documentation process?



Frequently Asked Questions



FAQ's

Q: Are we required to do the COS process for all children in the classroom, both with and without disabilities?

A: No, the COS process reflects two point-in-time assessments of its preschool children with disabilities. However, ongoing progress monitoring activities of all children is a best practice and includes observations and documentation of their performance using work samples, photos, videos, and notes collected during the school day. This information is used by teachers to determine instructional needs and progress on the curriculum. Ongoing progress monitoring also can help inform children's progress relative to IEP goals.

Q: Is there a mandated tool or process for conducting the COS process?

A: Data to complete the COS should be gathered at the initial evaluation and the IEP meeting upon entry, and prior to the end of the school year. Practitioners involved in the COS process are expected to have a thorough understanding of the tools and procedures to gather and submit timely and accurate data.

Different sites are currently using different methods (using a published tool such as Teaching Strategies Gold, Battelle Developmental Inventory, or Developmental Assessment of Young Children).

No matter the tool, the process used must result in valid and reliable scores.

Q: How can we prepare to utilize the COS process validly and reliably?

A: There are a variety of trainings and resources available for teams to ensure they are knowledgeable about the process. Professional development through the Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center includes [online modules, guides, and practice activities](#).

Available PD materials include:

- [COS Process Online Module](#)
- [Professional Development to Strengthen COS Knowledge and Skills](#)
- [Frequently Used Resources](#)

Questions?

- Contact
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