



NCDHH
Nebraska Commission
for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing



Language and Literacy Developmental Milestones for children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

Annual Report

Nebraska Department of Education
Office of Special Education

Nebraska Commission for the Deaf or Hard of Hearing

Introduction

This report is being provided in accordance with Legislative Bill 965, which was approved by the Nebraska State Legislature and Nebraska Governor in 2020, now codified as Nebraska Revised State Statutes § 20-601 and § 71-4746. Neb. Rev. Stat. § 20-601 recognized American Sign Language as a distinct and separate language, authorized schools and postsecondary educational institutions to offer courses in American Sign Language. Neb. Rev. Stat. § 71-4746 established a language assessment program for children who are deaf or hard of hearing. Neb. Rev. Stat. § 71-4746 also requires the State of Nebraska Department of Education, in collaboration with the Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, to provide a joint report on or before December 31 of every year that is specific to language and literacy developmental milestones for children age birth through five years of age who are deaf or hard of hearing, relative to such children's peers who are not deaf or hard of hearing. The joint report is based on existing data annually reported by the Department of Education in compliance with the federally required state performance plan.

State Reporting Requirements

The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) requires statewide programs to monitor and report child progress and outcomes. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part C (birth to 3 years) and IDEA Part B, Section 619 (preschool) programs report progress outcomes to OSEP during the reporting year in which children exit the program. Nebraska's state-approved ongoing progress monitoring tool for both programs is *Teaching Strategies GOLD* (TSG). Data collected using this valid and reliable assessment tool help to inform instruction and lesson planning as well as provide information routinely to address individual needs of children. The Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) uses child outcome data generated through TSG to submit its Annual Performance Report to OSEP through the Part B and Part C of IDEA State Performance Plan. By reviewing trend level data, NDE makes statewide decisions on professional development and identifies supports needed throughout Nebraska.

The use of TSG is required for all infants & toddlers and preschool-age children who have been identified with disabilities in Nebraska. All states are required to report data that align with three OSEP child outcomes: *Positive Social Relationships*; *Acquires and uses Knowledge and Skills*; and *Takes Appropriate Actions to Meet Needs*. TSG items are mapped to the three outcome areas according to the crosswalk presented in Table

1.1. TSG uses empirically derived cut scores. The total score for a given outcome area is used to determine the placement of a child's knowledge, skills, and abilities along a 9-point scale relative to a series of cut scores for each rating on the scale. Cut scores are provided in 3-month increments for ages 0 to 71 months. Hence, for each outcome area, the algorithm compares total scores on *GOLD* to age-specific cut scores to determine the placement of each child's knowledge, skills, and abilities on the 9-point scale. The final step in converting *GOLD* scores to reportable OSEP outcomes is to map from the 9-point ratings to the Office of Special Education Program's progress categories. Teaching Strategies' scoring system assigns 9-point ratings for each outcome area at entry into and upon exit from a program into one of five progress categories: (a) did not improve functioning; (b) improved functioning but not sufficient to move nearer to functioning comparable to same-aged peers; (c) improved functioning to a level nearer to same-aged peers but did not reach; (d) improved functioning to reach a level comparable to same-aged peers; and (e) maintained functioning at a level comparable to same-aged peers.

Annual Outcome Data

While TSG is required for all infants & toddlers and preschool-age children who have been identified with disabilities, outcome data is only reported to OSEP for children who have been in the program for at least six months and who have exited their program during the reporting year (July 1- June 30). During the 2024-2025 reporting year, data were available for 30 Part B children and 19 Part C children who were identified as deaf or hard of hearing in the NDE database. The progress category data for 2024-2025 are available in Figures 1.1 and 1.2 below.

Many children showed improved functioning. As illustrated in **Figure 1.1**, the percentage of Part C children functioning within age expectations by program exit was:

Figure 1.1. 2024 – 2025 Part C (Early Intervention) Outcome Data

- **Social-emotional skills:** 57.8%
- **Acquiring and using knowledge and skills:** 52.6%
- **Taking appropriate action to meet needs:** 68.4%

			Social Emotional Skills		Acquiring and Using Knowledge and Skills		Taking Appropriate Action to Meet Needs	
PART C CHILD PROGRESS DATA FOR FFY2024			# Of Children	% Of Children	# Of Children	% Of Children	# Of Children	% Of Children
a	Percent of infants and toddlers who did not improve functioning	1	5.3%	0	0.0%	0	0%	
b	Percent of infants and toddlers who improved functioning but not sufficient to move nearer to functioning comparable to same-aged peers	3	15.8%	4	21.1%	3	15.8%	
c	Percent of infants and toddlers who improved functioning to a level nearer to same-aged peers but did not reach it	4	21.1%	5	26.3%	3	15.8%	
d	Percent of infants and toddlers who improved functioning to reach a level compared to same aged peers	9	47.3%	10	52.6%	6	31.6%	
e	Percent of infants and toddlers who maintained functioning at a level comparable to same-aged peers	2	10.5%	0	0%	7	36.8%	
TOTAL		19	100%	19	100%	19	100%	

Figure 1.2. 2024 – 2025 Part B (Early Childhood Special Education) Outcome Data

Figure 1.2. shows that the majority of Part B students were functioning within age expectation by program exit.

- **Social-emotional skills:** 80.0%
- **Acquiring and using knowledge and skills:** 73.4%
- **Taking appropriate action to meet needs:** 76.7%

	Social Emotional Skills		Acquiring and Using Knowledge and Skills		Taking Appropriate Action to Meet Needs	
PART B CHILD PROGRESS DATA FOR FFY2024						
	# Of Children	% Of Children	# Of Children	% Of Children	# Of Children	% Of Children
a Percent of preschoolers who did not improve functioning	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
b Percent of preschoolers who improved functioning but not sufficient to move nearer to functioning comparable to same-aged peers	4	13.3%	4	13.3%	7	23.3%
c Percent of preschoolers who improved functioning to a level nearer to same-aged peers but did not reach it	2	6.7%	4	13.3%	0	0.0%
d Percent of preschoolers who improved functioning to reach a level compared to same aged peers	6	20.0%	5	16.7%	7	23.3%
e Percent of preschoolers who maintained functioning at a level comparable to same-aged peers	18	60.0%	17	56.7%	16	53.4%
TOTAL	30	100%	30	100%	30	100%

Table 1.1. Teaching Strategies GOLD OSEP Child Outcomes Crosswalk

Outcome 1 Positive social relationships	Outcome 2 Acquires and uses knowledge and skills	Outcome 3 Takes appropriate action to meet needs
<p>Social–Emotional</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Regulates own emotions and behaviors <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Manages feelings b. Follows limits and expectations 2. Establishes and sustains positive relationships <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Forms relationships with adults b. Responds to emotional cues c. Interacts with peers d. Makes friends 3. Participates cooperatively and constructively in group situations <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Balances needs and rights of self and others b. Solves social problems <p>Language</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. Listens to and understands increasingly complex language <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Comprehends language 10. Uses appropriate conversational and other communication skills <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Engages in conversations b. Uses social rules of language 	<p>Physical</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Demonstrates fine-motor strength and coordination <ol style="list-style-type: none"> b. Uses writing and drawing tools* <p>Language</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. Listens to and understands increasingly complex language <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Comprehends language b. Follows directions 9. Uses language to express thoughts and needs <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Uses an expanding expressive vocabulary b. Speaks clearly c. Uses conventional grammar d. Tells about another time or place <p>Cognitive</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 11. Demonstrates positive approaches to learning <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Attends and engages b. Persists c. Solves problems d. Shows curiosity and motivation e. Shows flexibility and inventiveness in thinking 12. Remembers and connects experiences <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Recognizes and recalls b. Makes connections 13. Uses classification skills 14. Uses symbols and images to represent something not present <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Thinks symbolically b. Engages in sociodramatic play 	<p>Social–Emotional</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Regulates own emotions and behaviors <ol style="list-style-type: none"> c. Takes care of own needs appropriately <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Eating and Drinking* 2) Toileting and personal hygiene* 3) Dressing* 4) Personal safety* <p>Physical</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Demonstrates traveling skills 7. Demonstrates fine-motor strength and coordination <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Uses fingers and hands

Outcome 1 Positive social relationships	Outcome 2 Acquires and uses knowledge and skills	Outcome 3 Takes appropriate action to meet needs
	<p>Literacy</p> <p>15. Demonstrates phonological awareness, phonics skills, and word recognition</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Notices and discriminates rhyme b. Notices and discriminates alliteration c. Notices and discriminates discrete units of sound <p>16. Demonstrates knowledge of the alphabet</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Identifies and names letters b. Identifies letter-sound correspondences <p>17. Demonstrates knowledge of print and its uses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Uses and appreciates books and other texts b. Uses print concepts <p>18. Comprehends and responds to books and other texts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Interacts during reading experiences, book conversations, and text reflections b. Uses emergent reading skills c. Retells stories and recounts details from informational texts <p>19. Demonstrates writing skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Writes name b. Writes to convey ideas and information 	

Outcome 1 Positive social relationships	Outcome 2 Acquires and uses knowledge and skills	Outcome 3 Takes appropriate action to meet needs
	Mathematics 20. Uses number concepts and operations a. Counts b. Quantifies c. Connects numerals with their quantities 21. Explores and describes spatial relationships and shapes a. Understands spatial relationships b. Understands shapes 22. Compares and measures a. Measures objects 23. Demonstrates knowledge of patterns	

* Precursor skills for functional behaviors. These skills may not be appropriate or expected for some children, including those with sensory, motor, or other impairments.

Summary

Statewide TSG outcome data demonstrate that Nebraska’s infants, toddlers, and preschool-aged children who are deaf or hard of hearing are making meaningful developmental progress in early language, social, and functional skills. The majority of preschoolers are functioning within age expectations at program exit, and more than half of early intervention children show expected performance or strong growth toward it.

This progress reflects the collective efforts of families, early interventionists, early childhood educators, audiologists, and statewide partners working to ensure children who are deaf or hard of hearing have equitable access to early language and literacy development—consistent with the goals of LB 965.