

Introduction to the ECO “Crosswalks” of Birth-to-Five Assessment Instruments to Early Childhood Outcomes

The “crosswalks” identify relationships between assessment instruments and the three child outcomes on which state Part C and 619 programs must report to the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP). States must report children’s progress in the outcome areas of:

1. Positive social emotional skills (including positive social relationships)
2. Acquisition and use of knowledge and skills (including early language/communication and early literacy)
3. Use of appropriate behaviors to meet their needs

Understanding the Three Child Outcomes

The three child outcomes reflect a global, overarching goal for all children: to be active and successful participants now and in the future, in a variety of settings. Accomplishments in various dimensions of each outcome area move a child toward that goal, as follows.

Outcome 1: Positive social emotional skills involves relating with adults, relating with other children, and, for older children, following rules related to groups or interacting with others. This outcome includes attachment/separation/autonomy, expressing emotions and feelings, learning rules and expectations, and social interactions and play.

Outcome 2: Acquisition and use of knowledge and skills involves thinking, reasoning, remembering, problem solving, using symbols and language, and understanding physical and social worlds. This outcome includes early concepts (symbols, pictures, numbers, classification, spatial relationships), imitation, object permanence, and language skills.

Outcome 3. Use of appropriate behaviors to meet their needs involves taking care of basic needs, getting from place to place, using tools and, for older children, contributing to their own health and safety. This outcome includes integrating motor skills to complete tasks, self-help skills (dressing, feeding, grooming, toileting, household responsibility), and acting on the world to get what one wants.

The three child outcomes are **functional** in that they reflect a child’s ability to take meaningful action in the context of everyday living. The outcome areas cross developmental domains, emphasizing the integration of skills and behaviors across domains for meaningful action. The presence of an isolated skill or behavior gives limited information about a child’s functioning. The outcomes address whether a child can integrate skills and put them to use across settings and situations. A child’s natural use of pointing to indicate what he needs or wants, for example, reflects functioning better than his ability to point to objects when asked to do so by a tester as part of an assessment.

Assessing the Three Child Outcomes

Assessing children's functioning in the three outcome areas requires multiple sources of information, including observation, family input, and data from one or more assessment tool. Observation and family input provide information about children's functioning across situations and settings. Data from the administration of a commercial assessment tool can be used to compare a child's skills and behaviors to those of his same-age peers. A limitation in the use of currently available assessment tools, however, is that they are not designed for direct measurement of the three outcomes. Most are organized around domains, with items separated into discrete areas of development, such as expressive language, receptive language, cognitive, gross motor, and fine motor. Some call for standardized assessment items to be administered in a setting other than the child's natural environment, making it difficult to use the information to determine whether a child uses this skill in everyday life.

The review of currently available assessment tools has been a primary activity for states as they consider options for measuring child outcomes. A key question is 'how much information will an assessment tool provide about the attainment of the three outcomes?' ECO developed the crosswalks to assist states and programs in making decisions about what instruments might be useful to include in an outcomes measurement system, including reporting to OSEP. The crosswalks indicate how the contents of the assessments maps to the three outcomes. The crosswalks also allow comparisons across instruments to see their various strengths and weaknesses with regard to the three outcomes.

Crosswalking Purposes

The ECO crosswalks display how content on a given assessment instrument is related to each of the three child outcomes. Organized in a table format with assessment areas assigned to each outcome, they provide a visual depiction of coverage. By showing how an assessment tool covers each of the three outcome areas, the crosswalks are meant to help states, programs, and providers see the extent of information available in an outcome area from a given assessment tool. Some of the crosswalks include examples of assessment items to illustrate the types of skills and behaviors the tool targets. In addition to comparing tools, states can use the crosswalks to determine areas in which additional information will need to be collected, such as through observation and family input, to make up for any shortcomings in the data provided by an assessment tool.

The crosswalks are not meant to be used as a "checklist" or "score sheet" for measuring child outcomes. ECO does not recommend the use of isolated items or areas of items from any given tool. We support the use of assessment instruments in the way in which they were designed to be used. In addition, given the functional nature of the outcomes, we support the use of assessment tools in conjunction with other sources of information about a child's functioning, such as observation and family report.

Crosswalks were generated for instruments based on the frequency of informal requests from states. Priority was also given to instruments that states identified for outcomes measurement in the State Performance Plans submitted to the Office of Special Education Programs in 2005. These crosswalks are presented as a service to the field.

The ECO Center does not endorse the use of any specific assessment instrument. Thus, a completed crosswalk does not constitute the endorsement of an instrument. If a crosswalk of an instrument is not available it is because, given the reality of finite

resources, it has not yet been completed. For more information about crosswalk content or specific instruments, please email a request to staff@the-eco-center.org.

Crosswalking Processes

We use the following guidelines in completing the crosswalks.

Level at which assessment tools are crosswalked. Criterion-referenced or curriculum-based assessment tools are typically crosswalked at the sub-area level, using the developer's headings. As appropriate, examples of items from a sub-area are included to illustrate the aspects of development that relate to the outcome. Norm-referenced tests¹ always are crosswalked at the lowest level that the tool developers recommend valid interpretation of the data and have provided normative information. This is usually at a subscale or sub-domain level,

Assignment of assessment area or sub-area to an outcome. We place areas/sub-areas/items from each assessment tool under the outcome to which they are most closely linked conceptually. For example, items about getting along with peers go with Outcome 1. Decisions are based on content of the area rather than the heading title because headings do not always reflect the range of behaviors and skills included. Particularly in the sub-areas of language and learning, it is difficult to assign items to outcomes when item content lacks specificity. In such cases we assume that the item pertains to a general, overarching acquisition and use of knowledge and skills, and therefore make the assignment to Outcome 2.

Double classification. Although many sub-areas or items can be double classified because of the interrelated nature of development in young children, we try to minimize double classification in order to minimize redundancy. Sub-areas or items that relate to a second outcome area, but not as strongly as they relate to a primary outcome area, are only classified with the primary area. Sub-areas or items are double classified when it is felt that the information contributes equally or nearly equally toward understanding achievement of more than one outcome.

“Precursor skills.” Some items on assessment tools target skills that, while not functional in and of themselves, may lead to functional behaviors. For example, a child's ability to use a pincer grasp may lead to his ability to feed himself or hold a pencil. Precursor skills that are clearly linked to one of the outcomes are placed with that outcome. We assign general or cross-cutting precursor skills to Outcome 2, as part of general acquisition and use of knowledge and skills. We also note in the crosswalks when precursor skills for functional behaviors skills, such as those associated with motor development, may not be appropriate or expected for children with sensory, motor, or other impairments.

Inclusion of every skill in a crosswalk. Not all skills in an assessment tool can be classified. Items/areas are left out that do not contribute to understanding the child's functional abilities in any particular outcome area. The decision not to classify areas such as sleeping, riding a tricycle, or moving to music is not meant to imply that such experiences are not important for young children.

¹ Crosswalks of norm-referenced instruments include a note providing information about the lowest appropriate threshold for crosswalking on that specific instrument.

Status of the Crosswalks

Crosswalks are available on the ECO website in draft form. On each crosswalk, a footnote indicates the date and the status of the draft. For instance, some drafts are preliminary; others have been revised based on input from assessment tool authors or publishers. Please compare the date on any crosswalk you are using to the version on the web site to see if you have the latest version since revisions are frequently posted.

Questions and comments are encouraged and should be sent to staff@the-eco-center.org. Also, please contact us if you are interested in a crosswalk that is not found on our website. Additional information about measuring outcomes can be found on our website at www.the-eco-center.org.