

**STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**  
**Bureau of Special Education**



**Connecticut's Early Childhood Outcome (ECO) Measurement System**  
(State Performance Plan (SPP) – Indicator #7)

The percent of preschool children who demonstrate improved:

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

(20 U.S.C. 1416(a)(3)(A))

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1. What Is The Purpose of The Early Childhood Outcome (ECO) Measurement System?  
Congress, in the reauthorization of the IDEA 2004, has required all states to provide data on the functional and developmental progress of young children with an IEP. The specific purpose of the statewide assessment of preschool-age children with disabilities is to collect and report data (e.g., assessment information) on children's functional and developmental progress in three specific early childhood areas.
2. Who Will Be Assessed?  
**All** preschool children who have been determined eligible for special education and who have their first IEP developed and implemented on and after May 1<sup>st</sup> 2006 will be administered an assessment to collect ECO information. **All** preschool children with an IEP include preschool children receiving a service – such as speech only children – as well as children receiving special education and related services in a classroom program. The federal requirement to collect and report assessment information applies to all young children with and IEP but does not apply to preschool children who do not have an IEP.
3. When Will Children Be Assessed?  
Children will be assessed at 2 points in time. They will be assessed upon entry to special education in the preschool grade and at exit from the preschool grade to kindergarten (or before for various reasons). Assessment for data collection at entry is to be conducted during the first 4 weeks that the child is receiving a program/service under an IEP. Assessment for data collection at exit must be conducted at the end of the school year before the child exits the preschool grade to kindergarten or must be conducted prior to the point in time when a child may be exiting preschool special education for other reasons such as a move to another state, discharge from special education or other reason.

Administration of the assessment to collect exit data for those children exiting the preschool grade to kindergarten should be conducted during the last 10 weeks of the school year.

4. What About Children with an IEP Who Only Receive Speech and Language?

The U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs and the IDEA 2004 clearly identify that all children with an IEP must be administered an assessment to collect developmental and functional information on individual children at two points in time: entry and exit. All children with an IEP include, all children with an IEP, including those children whose only special education service is speech and language. The service, frequency or intensity of a child's special education program does not determine which children are administered an assessment. The key indicator is that a child has an IEP.

5. Who Will Conduct The Assessment?

The child's primary special education service provider is responsible for conducting the assessment at a child's entry to and exit from special education in the preschool grade. The individuals who are most likely to administer a child's assessment at entry and at exit are the child's teacher and/or speech and language pathologist.

6. What Assessment Instrument Will Be Utilized for the ECO Requirement?

The BRIGANCE® Diagnostic Inventory of Early Development-II™ (hereafter referred to as the Brigance), will be used as a criterion-referenced instrument. The Brigance must be used to conduct the child assessment at both entry to and exit from the preschool grade for children with an IEP. The Brigance IED-II "Developmental Record Book" will be used to collect and record the assessment information at entry and at exit. Only selected sub-tests of the Brigance will be used. Districts are not required to administer the entire Brigance assessment at either a child's entry or exit from the preschool grade— only the state selected sub-tests.

7. Why Was The Brigance Chosen?

The Brigance was selected because the assessment instrument and the sub-tests of the assessment correspond to the three early childhood outcome areas to be measured for federal reporting and accountability purposes. The domain areas of the Brigance also align to the Connecticut Preschool Curriculum Framework (2006) and the Connecticut Preschool Assessment Framework (2005).

8. When Will The ECO Requirement To Assess Children Begin?

School districts are required to begin collecting entry information on all children who are determined eligible for special education and who have an IEP developed and implemented on and after May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2006. This assessment requirement will continue and will remain in place until such time that the federal government directs the state to redesign or end the data collection currently required.

9. Will School Districts Be Required To Assess Children In All Three Areas?

Yes. Regardless of the area in which the child is determined to have a disability and/or a developmental delay, all school districts must assess all preschool children with an IEP who were determined eligible and provided special education and related services in preschool on and after May 1<sup>st</sup> 2006. All preschool children with an IEP must be assessed in all three federal functional areas and must be assessed in all areas at entry into and at exit from the preschool grade.

10. Can Birth to Three Conduct The Assessment?

No. The Connecticut Birth to Three System (IDEA, Part C) has the same requirement as special education (IDEA, Part B) which is to assess the functional and developmental progress of all eligible infants and toddlers with an IFSP at entry to and at exit from birth to three services. The Connecticut Birth to Three System has selected two curriculum-based assessments, the Hawaii Early Learning Profile (HELP) and the Carolina Curriculum for Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities, to meet their federal requirement under the IDEA, Part C.

11. Do I Have To Obtain Signed Consent From A Parent to Administer the Assessment?

No. The State Department of Education has received an official response from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) regarding whether written parental consent is required prior to the administration of the Brigance for the purpose of data collection related to the ECO requirement and the State Performance Plan. OSEP has informed the Department that written parental consent is **NOT** required for the administration of the Brigance for the purpose of collecting entry and exit information on children with an IEP in the preschool grade. The administration, collection and reporting of child specific data using the Brigance assessment instrument is considered a federal requirement under IDEA 2004. Written parental consent would be required if the school district determines that the Brigance will be utilized for the purpose of determining a child's eligibility and/or designing an appropriate IEP for a child.

12. Can Parent's Have Their Children Opt Out of the Brigance Assessment?

When the Brigance is administered by the school district for the purpose of collecting and reporting child assessment information for the early childhood outcome requirement, parents cannot have their child opt out of this federal requirement. Neither parents nor the school district can have children opt out of participation in the collection and reporting of pre- and post-test information needed to meet the early childhood outcome requirement. This is a federal requirement for all children with an IEP in the preschool grade.

13. Can I Use The Brigance for Eligibility Determination?

The Department has selected the Brigance for the purpose of collecting data on children's functional and developmental progress in order to report on the state's early childhood outcomes for children with an IEP in the preschool grade. **If** a school district opts to use the Brigance as one of the assessment tools to determine an individual child's eligibility, the instrument must be used in accordance with the author and publisher's directions for test administration and not the abbreviated version designed for federal data collection and reporting. Please be advised that it is not the intent or recommendation of the state in selecting this instrument to infer implicitly or explicitly that the Brigance must or should be used as an assessment instrument to determine a child's eligibility for special education.

14. Can I Use The Brigance for Program Planning – Curriculum Planning?

The Department has selected the Brigance for the purpose of collecting data on children's functional and developmental progress in order to report on the state's early childhood outcomes. The Brigance is aligned with the Connecticut Preschool Curriculum Framework (2006) and the Connecticut Preschool Assessment Framework (2006). The Brigance was selected because the Brigance can be cross-walked to the state's two curricula documents. The Brigance is not intended to replace or serve as a substitute for the state recommended

use of the Connecticut Preschool Curriculum Framework (2006), which serves as the State's early learning standards; and/or the Connecticut Preschool Assessment Framework (2006), which serves as the State's assessment for measuring children progress and for supporting curriculum and instruction. Please be advised that it is not the intent or recommendation of the state in selecting the Brigance to infer implicitly or explicitly that the Brigance must or should be used for program or curriculum planning for an individual child or for a group of children in the preschool grade.

15. What If A Child With an IEP Moves Before Kindergarten?

To the extent that a school district has knowledge that a child's family is moving residency, and that the child and their family will be **leaving the state**, school districts should plan accordingly and administer the Brigance for the purpose of collecting a child's exit information. If a child and family are **moving to another school district in the state**, the receiving school district should verify from the sending school district that entry information has already been collected and reported and then has the responsibility to collect and report the child's exit information.

16. Can A School District Utilize The IEP or A Kindergarten Assessment to Collect the ECO Data?

No. School districts are required to use the Brigance to collect the entry and exit information using the Brigance to meet the early childhood outcome requirement. It is important to note that all preschool children with an IEP need to be assessed at exit from preschool (spring/summer of a school year) and not at kindergarten entry (fall of a school year).

17. Is The Brigance Information Part of The Child's Educational Record?

Yes. Under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), the Brigance information is considered to be part of the child's educational record and subject to the confidentiality requirements of both FERPA and IDEA. It is recommended that the Brigance Developmental Record Book be kept in the child's educational record until such time as both the child's entry and exit information have been obtained and reported. Districts can then incorporate the data results from the assessment obtained instead of maintaining the test record booklet containing the raw scores.

18. What If The Child Will Be Receiving ESY Services?

School districts can opt to assess the child for the purpose of collecting entry and/or exit data during the provision of special education and related services in an extended school year (ESY) program. For example, if a child enters and begins receipt of their special education and related services in an ESY program, districts can collect the Brigance entry data during the first 4 weeks of the implementation of the IEP or can use the first four weeks of the start of the school year to collect the data. If a child is receiving ESY services during the summer prior to the child's entry to kindergarten, districts can use the time during ESY to collect the child's exit data or can opt to do so prior to the end of the preschool year.

19. What If A Child Exits From Special Education Before Kindergarten?

If a child's planning and placement team (PPT) determines that a child will be exiting from special education before the end of the grade preschool to kindergarten because the child is no longer eligible for special education, the school district must conduct the Brigance

assessment to collect and report the exit data before the child is exited from their special education program/ service.

20. Must I Assess Children with Significant Intellectual Disabilities?

Yes. All children, regardless of their disability, must be assessed in all areas. No child found eligible for special education and related services will be excluded from participation in the collection of entry and exit data using the Brigance assessment tool.

21. What About Children Who Are Blind, Deaf and/or With Significant Impairments?

Children who are blind, visually impaired, deaf, hearing impaired, have an orthopedic impairment and/or who have multiple disabilities or any other significant disability must be included in the collection of entry and exit information using the Brigance assessment tool. Individual children may require adaptations or modifications in order to collect information on their skills and knowledge in the various required sub-tests of the Brigance. Individual teachers and/or school district personnel will need to identify what modifications and adaptations are most appropriate for individual children. In some cases, even with significant modifications and adaptations, assessors may not be able to collect information from some children on some sub-tests either at entry and/or exit. In such circumstances, a sub-test score may be zero. It is important to note that the Brigance assessment protocols allow for some child specific information to be collected through observation and parent interview rather than through direct test administration. Additionally, the Department has identified some sub-tests of the Brigance which can be used as an "alternate assessment" for children with significant development and functional impairments.

22. What Does "Exit" Mean?

Exit means: (a) the child has an IEP and is leaving the preschool grade and is going to kindergarten the following school year; (b) the child's planning and placement team has decided to exit a child from special education at any time in the preschool grade prior to kindergarten entry, (c) the child's family is changing residency and is leaving the state, and/or (d) exit for any other possible reason (e.g., parents withdraw the child from public education, DCF change in placement, etc.).

23. Did The Department Consider Other Tests or Measures To Collect The Data?

Yes. The Department conducted a number of activities. The Department had an early childhood stakeholder group that made recommendations of assessment instruments to the State Department of Education. The Department surveyed other states and consulted with national organizations and technical assistance groups that included the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs; the National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center and the National Early Childhood Outcomes Center.

24. What If A Child Exits Special Education Before Six Months of Service?

If a child has received less than six months of service, the school district will not be required to administer and report exit data using the Brigance assessment tool. The school district and the Department will have entry data that will have been collected and reported on this child but will likely not have exit data on this child. The collection and reporting of exit information using the Brigance is not required since the child exited the program before receiving six months of special education and related services. The data collection system will allow districts to enter the web-based data collection system to report that exit information will not exist because the child received less than 6 months of special education.

25. What If I Know A Child Will Receive Six Months or Less of Service?

The Department does recommend that school districts conduct the Brigance assessment for all children with an IEP at entry to special education in the preschool grade even if the district initially believes that a child will most likely receive less than 6 months of special education. Individual decisions made by a child's planning and placement team and/or a child's parents at a later point in a school year could determine that a child may require an additional year of the preschool grade which would require that assessment information be available.

26. Does The Assessment Requirement Only Apply To 3 Year-Olds?

No. Entry data must be collected on any preschool child with an IEP, or any child with an IEP who enters preschool on and after May 1<sup>st</sup> 2006 regardless of whether they enter special education as a 3-year-old, 4-year-old or 5-year-old. The collection of Brigance entry date would apply to 5-year-old children if they are determined eligible for special education and placed in the preschool grade.

27. What If A Child Enters Preschool Special Education As A 4-Year-Old in the Spring?

If a 4-year-old child is found eligible for special education and the child's IEP is implemented in the spring of the school year, the Department recommends that the school district collect entry information using the Brigance even if there is a question as to whether the child will be able to receive six months of special education services. The requirement to collect early childhood outcome information applies to children who have had an IEP in place for at least six months. In some cases, a child will **not** have been receiving special education and related services for a six month period before exiting the preschool grade to kindergarten. If a school district is unsure whether a child will exit the preschool grade to kindergarten, the district must collect and report the child's entry information in case a decision is made to delay a child's entry to kindergarten.

28. What If A Child's Language Is Not English?

School districts must administer the Brigance on all children with an IEP in the preschool grade even if a child's primary language is not English. The Brigance criterion-referenced assessment instrument protocols allow for the collection of information through observation and parent interview. The instrument also allows for certain accommodations and adaptations in order to allow for the collection of information. The central question assessment administrators should be asking is, "what is the functional nature of the information I am to be collecting and in what ways might this be evidenced?"

29. What About Children Retained in Preschool – Delayed Entry To Kindergarten?

There are no clear academic benefits in delaying a child's entry to kindergarten – in other words retaining children in preschool when they are kindergarten eligible is not supported by the research and literature. It is anticipated that school district planning and placement teams will consider placement for children with an IEP in an age and grade appropriate placement with the appropriate individualized services and supports for the child in the least restrictive environment kindergarten environment. If, however, a kindergarten eligible child is retained in preschool, the school district would collect the child's exit information when the child exits preschool to kindergarten.

30. Do I Have To Assess Children Who Had an IEP Prior to May 2006?

No. School districts are not required to assess those preschool children with an IEP who were receiving special education and related services prior to May 1<sup>st</sup> 2006. It is only those preschool children who had an IEP developed and implemented on and after May 1<sup>st</sup> 2006 for which entry and exit data will be collected. The collection of entry and exit information will apply and will be an on-going requirement from May 2006 and each school year thereafter until such time that the federal government directs the state to redesign or end the data collection currently required.

31. What Will This Assessment Be Used For?

The purpose of collecting and reporting statewide aggregate data on child progress to the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) is to answer three federally required questions about children's developmental and functional progress during the time that children with an IEP received special education and related services in the preschool grade. IDEA 2004 also requires that data on children's developmental and functional progress be made available to the public on each individual school district on an annual basis. The early childhood outcome information collected and reported is about the collective results of the state and the collective results of individual school districts and not about an individual child's status. Essentially the results will be used to evaluate program effectiveness and identify program improvements.

32. What If I Am A Small School District With Small Numbers?

The requirement to collect entry and exit information using the Brigance assessment applies to all school districts in the state regardless of their size. The state will aggregate child progress data from all school districts, including small schools, however the state will not make individual school district results on child progress publicly available when the numbers of children within a school district are so small so as to risk disclosing personally identifiable information and/or provide public information that would not fairly represent school district efforts in this area.

33. Where Can I Get Information About Connecticut's State Performance Plan (SPP)?

Connecticut's State Performance Plan (SPP) has been posted on the State Department of Education web site at: <http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2626&q=322094> . The document is entitled "The State Performance Plan (Part B SPP) 2008 (data represents the school year 2006-2007).

34. Are There Any Resources Where I Can Get Additional Information?

There are three federal resources that the Department relies upon in addition to the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP). Those include: (a) The Federal Resource Center at: <http://www.rfcnetwork.org/> ; (b) The Early Childhood Outcomes (ECO) Center at: <http://www.the-eco-center.org>; and (c) The National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center at: <http://www.nectac.org>

35. When Will Data Be Reported To OSEP?

The state submitted the first State Performance Plan (SPP) in December 2005. Amendments to the State Performance Plan are made in many areas annually. The last submission of a State Performance Plan occurred in February 2008. In the State Performance Plan submitted February 2008, the State Department of Education submitted the first year of progress data on children's developmental and functional progress based upon data collected by the administration of the Brigance assessment tool in the 2006-07

school year. The most recent submission of the State Performance Plan can be found on the Department's web site at: <http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2626&q=322094>

Along with the submission of the State Performance Plan, the state also submits an Annual Performance Report (APR) to detail the state's progress relative to the data targets established in the State Performance Plan. Baseline and targets for the early childhood outcome requirement will need to be provided by the state in the February 2010 submission which will reflect the data collected in the 2008-09 school year. The next period for reporting ECO child progress data will be in the State Performance Plan submitted in February 2009.

36. When Will The State Provide "Progress Data"?

The first "progress data" for which the State has both entry and exit information is publicly available in the State Performance Plan submitted to the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs in February 2008. Child progress data will be submitted annually thereafter. Ultimately, the State will be required to establish baseline and annual targets based upon the child progress data collected and reported and must be reported by states in the February 2010 submission of the State Performance Plan.

37. Who Is Responsible for the Early Childhood Outcome Requirement?

School districts are responsible and accountable for the early childhood outcome requirement for all preschool children with disabilities receiving special education and related services in the preschool grade even when those children are served by other public or private entities under an IEP. Other public or private entities include RESC programs, Charter and Magnet Schools and/or Approved Private Special Education Programs.

38. What if a Child With an IEP Attends a RESC Program, Charter or Magnet School? Who Is Responsible for Meeting the Early Childhood Outcome Requirement?

The responsibility for meeting the early childhood outcome requirement belongs to each school district. What this means is that a school district is responsible for a child with an IEP who is attending a RESC program, a Charter or Magnet School or even a private special education facility under an IEP. The child's school district is responsible for the collection and reporting of Brigance entry and exit data on each child who begins receiving special education on and after May 1st 2006 and thereafter regardless of **where** (e.g., RESC, Charter, Magnet and/or private special education facility) the child receives their IEP services.

39. What If A School District Requests That RESCs, Charter or Magnet Schools or Private Providers Collect the Early Childhood Outcome Information?

The Department recognizes that RESCs, Charter Schools, Magnet Schools or private school institutions that provide a child's IEP services may know the child best and may be in the best position to assist school districts with the administration of the Brigance. If an school district asks and utilizes these programs and their personnel - such as the RESCs, Charter, Magnet and/or private special education facilities - to administer the Brigance on behalf of the school district, then the school district should provide the needed resources to that school or facility including specifically purchasing the Brigance manual, developmental record books and any other resources that would be needed to administer, collect and/or report the data on behalf of the school district.

40. How Does the Department Anticipate that School Districts and RESCs, Charter and Magnet Schools and/or Private Special Education Facilities Will Work Together on the Early Childhood Outcome Requirement?

The Department anticipates that each school district will communicate and collaborate with any RESC, Charter, Magnet and/or private special education facility to ensure that the early childhood outcome requirement is being met. That means upon determination that a child will receive their IEP services at a facility or program outside of the public school, the school district must work with that RESC, Charter, Magnet and/or private special education facility to identify amongst a number of things, who will collect the data on the child, how child specific information will be maintained and protected, how information be provided to the school district for reporting to the Department, how confidentiality will be protected and maintained, etc.

41. Does The Early Childhood Outcome Requirement Apply To 2-Year-Old Children Who Will Turn Three in the School Year?

Yes. School districts who elect to provide an IEP to 2-year-old children who will turn age three within a school year must administer the Brigance at a child's entry to special education. In such cases, the Brigance assessment must be administered during the first four weeks that the child begins receiving their special education and related services. IDEA provides that a free appropriate public education (FAPE) can be provided to 2-year-old children who will turn three in a school year.

If I Have Additional Questions – Who Can I Contact?

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