

PRE-ELEMENTARY EDUCATION LONGITUDINAL STUDY  
**PEELS PROGRESS**

*Notes*

NCSEER 2010-3002

**FINDINGS**

*Fifty-eight percent of parents reported that their child's behavior was age-appropriate; five percent reported that their child's behavior was severely inappropriate.*

*Forty-three percent of parents reported that their child was not at all aggressive with other children; six percent reported that their child was often aggressive with other children.*

*Twenty-nine percent of parents reported that their child was not at all good at paying attention and staying focused on what he/she was doing.*

*Thirty-five percent of parents reported that their child was very restless and fidgeted a lot.*

*Preschoolers with Disabilities:  
A Look at Social Behavior*

The Pre-Elementary Education Longitudinal Study (PEELS) has been examining the preschool and early elementary school experiences of 3-, 4-, and 5-year-old children with disabilities. The study followed a nationally representative sample of more than 3,000 children who received preschool special education services until 2009, when they were ages 8 through 10. This *PEELS Progress Notes* presents emerging findings related to children's social behavior. The findings in this document are highlights from Carlson et al. (2009). This document includes only results for Year 1. Results for Years 1 and 2 are available in the longer report.

**The Social Behavior of Preschoolers with Disabilities**

An association between social competence, such as cooperation and self-control, and achievement and school adjustment has been demonstrated (Meier, DiPerna, & Oster 2006). Research suggests that children identified as having mild disabilities, including learning disabilities, display "difficulties in negotiating both peer-related and teacher-related adjustments in school settings...had poorer social skills, exhibited more interfering problem behaviors, and were poorly accepted or rejected by peers" (Gresham & MacMillian 1997, p. 377).

**Data Sources**

Data in this document were obtained from **PEELS Wave 1 parent interviews**. A parent/guardian of each child in the sample was asked to complete a 1-hour computer-assisted telephone interview about his/her child's health and disability, school programs and services, special education and related services, child care, and out-of-school activities. Respondents also were asked a series of questions about their household, its resources, and their family background. The response rate for the 2003–04 parent interview was 96 percent. In the interview, parents of preschoolers with disabilities were asked a variety of questions related to their child's social skills and problem behaviors, including overall appropriateness of behavior, involvement in everyday activities, ability to pay attention, trouble playing with other children, aggression toward other children, and restlessness. *Note:* Data collection instruments can be found at [www.peels.org](http://www.peels.org).

**Parent Report of Social Skills and Problem Behaviors**

The table shows the percentage of parents who selected each response option. Based on parent data, PEELS children exhibited a range of social behaviors. Over-

**Percentage of children whose parents reported that their child exhibited various social skills and problem behaviors: School year 2003–04**

|                                                                                |       |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|
| <b>Appropriateness of behavior</b>                                             |       |
| • Age appropriate                                                              | 58.2% |
| • Mildly inappropriate                                                         | 23.3% |
| • Moderately inappropriate                                                     | 13.9% |
| • Severely inappropriate                                                       | 4.6%  |
| <b>Easily involved in everyday things</b>                                      |       |
| • Very easily involved                                                         | 53.6% |
| • Somewhat involved                                                            | 35.4% |
| • Not easily involved                                                          | 11.0% |
| <b>Good at paying attention and staying focused on what he or she is doing</b> |       |
| • Very good at paying attention                                                | 29.1% |
| • Somewhat good at paying attention                                            | 42.1% |
| • Not at all good at paying attention                                          | 28.8% |
| <b>Trouble playing with other children</b>                                     |       |
| • No trouble                                                                   | 56.2% |
| • Some trouble                                                                 | 33.8% |
| • A lot of trouble                                                             | 10.0% |
| <b>Aggressive with other children</b>                                          |       |
| • Not at all aggressive                                                        | 42.8% |
| • Sometimes aggressive                                                         | 50.8% |
| • Often aggressive                                                             | 6.4%  |
| <b>Restless, fidgets a lot, has trouble sitting still</b>                      |       |
| • Very restless                                                                | 34.6% |
| • Somewhat restless                                                            | 33.8% |
| • Not at all restless                                                          | 31.7% |

*Note:* Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

all, 58 percent of parents indicated that their child’s behavior was age appropriate (*S.E.* = 1.1).<sup>1</sup> Fifty-six percent of parents reported that their child had no trouble playing with other children (*S.E.* = 1.5), and 43 percent of parents indicated that their child was not at all aggressive with other children (*S.E.* = 1.2). Twenty-nine percent of parents reported that their child was very good at paying attention (*S.E.* = 2.0), and 32 percent of parents reported that their child was not at all restless (*S.E.* = 1.2).

Some parents reported difficulty with their child’s behavior. Five percent of parents reported that their child’s behavior was severely inappropriate (*S.E.* = 0.5). Ten percent of parents described their child as having a lot of trouble playing with other children (*S.E.* = 0.6), and 6 percent of parents reported that their child was often aggressive with other children (*S.E.* = 0.6). In addition, 29 percent of parents indicated that their child was not at all good at paying attention (*S.E.* = 1.3), and 35 percent of parents reported that their child was very restless and had trouble sitting still (*S.E.* = 1.5).

**References Cited in This Report**

Carlson, E., Daley, T., Bitterman, A., Heinzen, H., Keller, B., Markowitz, J., & Riley, J. (2009). *Early school transitions and the social behavior of children with disabilities: Selected findings from the Pre-Elementary Education Longitudinal Study*. Rockville, MD: Westat. Available at [www.peels.org](http://www.peels.org).

Gresham, F., & MacMillian, D. (1997). Social competence and affective characteristics of children with mild disabilities. *Review of Educational Research*, 67(4), 377–415.

Meier, C., DiPerna, J., & Oster, M. (2006). Importance of social skills in the elementary grades. *Education & Treatment of Children*, 29(3), 409–418.



<sup>1</sup> *S.E.* = standard error.