

Disparities in early learning and development: Lessons from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study- Birth Cohort (ECLS-B) ^[1]

Prepared for Thomas Schultz, Council of Chief State School Officers

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AVAILABILITY

- Report in pdf ^[2]

Description: This report released by Child Trends that was commissioned by the Council of Chief State School Officers, traces the cognitive, social-emotional, and health outcomes of a nationally representative sample of infants at nine months and twenty-four months of age. The report investigates whether the developmental outcomes of the infants are correlated with certain economic, social, and demographic factors. Four potential risk factors (family income, race/ethnicity, home language, mother's educational attainment) and three areas of development (cognitive, general health, and social-emotional) are analyzed. Overall, the report finds that developmental disparities arise as early as nine months of age and that these disparities widen by 24 months of age. Among the report's executive summary findings: -Low family income and maternal education: The two factors most strongly correlated with poorer health and developmental outcomes were low family income and maternal education. At both nine and twenty-four months, children from low-income families scored lower on cognitive assessments than children from higher-income families. In addition, they were less likely to be in good or excellent health and receive positive behavior ratings. -Racial/ethnic minority groups and home language: At both nine and twenty-four months, children from racial/ethnic minority groups or whose home language was not English generally scored lower on cognitive and behavior assessments and were less likely to be in good or excellent health compared to other children. -Infants and toddlers in low-income families: About half of infants (51 percent) and toddlers (46 percent) live in low-income families with household incomes at or below 200 percent of the poverty line. Of these children, 89 percent of infants and 88 percent of toddlers have at least one additional risk factor. The report finds that the more risk factors a child possesses, the greater the disparity in developmental and health outcomes. The report recommends that strategies for closing developmental gaps should begin as early as nine months and that these actions should focus on low-income children. In addition, the report calls for quality improvements in early care settings and better parent support and education.

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