



New Jersey Department of Education  
Office of Special Education

# **NJDOE INDICATOR 7: CHILD OUTCOMES SUMMARY**

**DEVELOPMENTAL  
MILESTONES TO  
SUPPORT  
AGE-ANCHORING**



# Purpose and Statement

This developmental tool is not just a checklist; it is a dynamic guide designed to empower early educators in their vital role. Our purpose is to provide a clear, insightful framework that helps you confidently identify age-expected skills in young children. By synthesizing highly regarded resources and early childhood research, this tool offers a focused, yet accessible, compilation that supports teams in making informed decisions regarding each child's unique developmental journey and fostering optimal growth.

One of the tool's key strengths is its support for accurate age anchoring—helping teams clearly understand how a child's current skills align with typical developmental expectations for their age. This clarity is essential for consistent, objective discussions and decision-making.

It is important to use this tool alongside the additional Child Outcomes Summary (COS) resources to carry out a meaningful and collaborative process. While the COS is not an assessment, it relies on high-quality assessment data and informed team input—making tools like this essential for supporting accurate, age-anchored ratings and shared understanding.



# Developmental Milestones

## 6 Months

### Social - Emotional

#### **Self-Regulation:**

- Stops crying when held and gently rocked or talked to by familiar caregiver.
- Likes to look at self in the mirror.
- Looks for familiar caregiver, favorite toy, or blanket.

#### **Relationship with adults:**

- Recognizes/knows familiar people.
- Follows movement of caregiver about the room with their eyes.
- Listens intently to familiar voices.
- Likes to play with others, especially parents.

#### **Relationship with peers and Play Skills:**

- Watches other infants and toddlers from a distance.
- Responds to other people's emotions and often seems happy.
- Laughs.
- Makes a game out of knocking a toy over and making it come back up.

### Movement & Physical

#### **Gross-Motor:**

- Leans on hands to support themselves when sitting.
- Uses arms and legs to move forward and backward. Rolls over in both directions.

#### **Fine-Motor:**

- Looks at an object in their hands while bringing it to mouth.
- Uses hands and actions, such as hitting, shaking, and patting, to explore different ways to use a new toy.
- Begins to pass things from one hand to the other.

#### **Self-help:**

- Demonstrates when hungry by crying and quiet down when picked up for breastfeeding or when seeing caregiver with bottle.
- Places hands on bottle while being fed by caregiver.

### Language & Communication

#### **Receptive:**

- Turns head towards the sound of your voice.
- Smiles when spoken to or when greeted with a smiling face.
- Reacts to loud sounds.
- Responds to tone of voice, such as becoming excited or soothed when someone engages them.

#### **Expressive:**

- Vocalizes during play or with objects in mouth.
- Makes sounds to show joy or displeasure.
- Takes turns making sounds with you.
- Strings vowels together when babbling ("ah", "eh", "oh") and likes taking turns with parent while making sounds
- Reacts to toys that make sounds, like those with bells or music.

### Cognitive

#### **Learning:**

- Attends to colors and lights or notice patterns and shapes.
- Puts everything in their mouth to explore, touch and taste.
- Stares intently at new faces or objects.
- Looks at books and pats the pictures.
- Follows sounds with a reaction.
- Drops toy repeatedly and waits for someone to pick it up.

#### **Thinking:**

- Closes lips to show they don't want more food.
- Shows curiosity about things and tries to get things that are out of reach.

#### **Problem-Solving:**

- Reaches to grab a toy they want.
- Grasps a new toy and explore it by turning it over and over.
- Swipes or kicks at toy and repeat actions to make it move again and again.



# Developmental Milestones

## 12 Months

### Social - Emotional

#### **Self-Regulation:**

- Shows several facial expressions, like happy, sad, angry, surprised.
- Hands you a book when they want to hear a story.
- Shows awareness of own name.
- Shows a preference for particular items or people.

#### **Relationship with adults:**

- Is shy, clingy, or fearful around strangers.
- Reacts when familiar adult leave (looks, reaches for you, or cries).
- Smiles, waves or laughs in response to positive adult interaction.
- Enjoys playing games (i.e. "peek-a-boo").
- Gives a hug.

#### **Relationship with peers and Play Skills:**

- Vocalizes and gets excited when near other infants and toddlers.
- Reaches out to touch another's face or hair.
- Plays near other children.

### Movement & Physical

#### **Gross-Motor:**

- Gets in and out of the sitting position with ease, sits independently maintaining balance.
- Pulls up to stand.
- Walks, holding on to furniture.
- May stand alone.
- Throws a ball or bean bag.

#### **Fine-Motor:**

- Pincer grasp develops; picks up cereal/small objects with thumb and index finger.
- Imitates tool use (i.e. brushing hair, using a toothbrush).
- Removes socks.
- Grasps with thumb and 2 fingers.

#### **Self-help:**

- Picks things up between thumb and pointer finger, like small bits of food.
- Drinks from a cup without a lid, as you hold it.
- Lifts arms when getting shirt put on or off.

### Language & Communication

#### **Receptive:**

- Understands "no" (pause briefly or stop when you say it).
- Watches a person's face and hands when they are talking or gesturing.
- Look at person who calls their name or speaks to them.
- Responds to simple words or phrases.

#### **Expressive:**

- Uses simple gestures (i.e. shaking head "no" or waving "bye-bye").
- Lifts arms up to be picked up.
- Produces own sounds or babbles either by themselves or in response to others talking to them.
- Makes sounds with changes in tone (i.e. sounds more like speech).
- Calls a parent "mama" or "dada" or another special name.
- Imitates and initiates gestures for engaging in social interactions and playing games, like blowing kisses or playing peek-a-boo.
- Shows dislike for certain foods or drinks.

### Cognitive

#### **Learning:**

- Puts something in a container, takes things out, and/or dumps a container.
- Bangs two things together.
- Touches and feels person's hair or put their hands on person's face to feel skin.
- Looks at the right picture or item when it's named.

#### **Thinking:**

- Looks for things they see you hide, like a toy under a blanket.
- Imitates shaking or patting a toy or another object.

#### **Problem-Solving:**

- Pushes a button to turn a toy on or off to start or stop an action and may repeat the action.
- Crawls around a chair to get an object that has rolled behind it.
- Uses a trusted caregiver as a tool to solve a physical problem.



# Developmental Milestones

## 18 Months

### Social - Emotional

#### **Self-Regulation:**

- Uses physical contact to express emotions (kissing, biting, hugging or patting).
- Copes with stress by playing with familiar toys in a favorite spot.
- Seems proud to do things and claps when excited.
- May have temper tantrums.

#### **Relationship with adults:**

- Cries when left with a new caregiver, but may respond to soothing words, holding and other forms of comfort.
- Shows affection to familiar people (hugs, cuddles, or kisses you).
- Points to show you something interesting.
- Explores alone but with caregiver close by.
- Looks at a few pages in a book with you.

#### **Relationship with peers and Play Skills:**

- Responds to other's excitement by watching and showing some feelings or emotions.
- Offers a toy to another infant who is crying/upset.
- Copies other children while playing, like taking toys out of a container when another child does.
- Likes to hand things to others in play.

### Movement & Physical

#### **Gross-Motor:**

- Walks easily, without holding on to anything.
- Climbs on and off a couch or chair without help.
- May walk up steps.
- Rolls a ball back.
- Pulls toys while walking.

#### **Fine-Motor:**

- Uses pincer grasp with thumb and forefinger together to pick up small objects.
- Scribbles independently.
- Builds a stack of 2-3 blocks or cans.

#### **Self-help:**

- Feeds self some finger foods while sitting.
- Tries to use a utensil according to the cultural expectations of their family and community.
- Cooperates when getting physical needs met, such as getting his/her diaper changed, nose wiped, or teeth brushed.
- Helps you dress by pushing arm through sleeve or lifting up foot.
- Puts hands out for you to wash them.
- Drinks from a cup without a lid and may spill sometimes.

### Language & Communication

#### **Receptive:**

- Looks at a familiar object when you name it.
- Looks around when asked "where" questions.
- Identifies one or more body parts.
- Follows directions - like: "Give me the ball," "Hug the teddy bear," "Come here," or "Show me your nose."
- Responds to questions or simple requests with either a non-verbal or verbal answer.

#### **Expressive:**

- Imitates sounds or familiar words of home language.
- Uses gestures when excited, like clapping or giving a high-five, or when being silly, like sticking out their tongue or making funny faces.
- Uses a combination of long strings of sounds, syllables, and real words with speech-like inflection.
- Tries to say three or more words besides "mama" or "dada".
- Points to make requests, to comment, or to get information.
- Says and shakes head "no".
- Understands and uses words for common objects, some actions, and people in their lives.

### Cognitive

#### **Learning:**

- Points to get the attention of others.
- Names one picture.
- Approaches objects with an intent to cause a certain effect.
- Pats pictures in books.
- Knows what ordinary things are (i.e. telephone, brush, spoon).

#### **Thinking:**

- Copies adult doing chores, like sweeping with a broom.
- Plays with toys in a simple way, like pushing a toy car.
- Plays simple pretend (i.e. feeding a doll).
- Tries to bite into a plastic apple or other fruit that looks like a real one.

#### **Problem-Solving:**

- Tries to use things the right way, like a phone, cup, or book.
- Tries many different ways such as poking with fingers shaking or dumping to get clothespins out of a bottle.
- Tries to find things if asked, "Where is the...".
- Finds a toy hidden under something.



# Developmental Milestones

## 2 Years

### Social - Emotional

#### **Self-Regulation:**

- Follows simple one-step directions such as "Get your shoes."
- Shows more independence with everyday tasks.
- Tries to clean up when they spill or make a mess.
- Gets upset when familiar routines are disrupted.

#### **Relationship with adults:**

- Looks at familiar adults face to see how to react in a new situation.
- Takes turns with caregiver during play and interaction.
- Says "Hi" or "Bye-bye," smile or wave when familiar people enter or leave the room.
- Seeks contact with familiar adult when exploring a new situation.
- Watches from a distance before approaching a new visitor.

#### **Relationship with peers and Play Skills:**

- Notices when others are hurt or upset, like pausing or looking sad, when someone crying.
- Knows the names of some other children.
- Shows excitement when with other children.
- May not want to share and enjoys independent play.
- Imitates actions/copies others, especially adults and older children.
- Plays mainly beside other children, but is beginning to include other children (i.e. chase games).

### Movement & Physical

#### **Gross-Motor:**

- Runs from place to place by self.
- Walks (not climbs) up a few stairs with or without help.
- Jumps off floor with two feet.
- Kicks a ball.
- Stands on tiptoes.
- Throws a ball overhand.

#### **Fine-Motor:**

- Builds towers of 4 or more blocks.
- Pushes and pats puzzle pieces into place.
- Makes marks on the paper with fingerprint or crayons.
- Intentionally drops an item into a container.

#### **Self-help:**

- Eats with a utensil according to the cultural expectations of their family and community.
- Participate in health care routines, such as using tissues to wipe nose, washing, and drying hands and holding a toothbrush.
- Point at, say name, or use sign language for what he/she wants to eat or drink, such as "apple" or "milk."
- Undresses themselves.

### Language & Communication

#### **Receptive:**

- Points to things in a book when you ask like "Where is the bear?"
- Knows names of familiar people, pets, and body parts.
- Point to at least two body parts when asked.
- Understands words or signs when told it is time to eat by going to wash hands or coming to the table.
- Understands 2-step related directions and respond appropriately when given simple requests with words or gestures, such as "Sit down, please" or "Give me the toy."

#### **Expressive:**

- Puts two or more words together, like "More water" or "go outside".
- Uses more gestures than just waving and pointing, like blowing a kiss or nodding yes.
- Shakes head or use words to respond to "Yes" or "No" questions.
- Imitates new words, signs or repeat simple rhymes.
- Uses names for familiar adults or other children.
- Uses home language with a vocabulary of 50 or more words or signs by 26 months.
- Takes turns in simple conversations with familiar adults.
- Uses possessives, like "Daddy's sock".

### Cognitive

#### **Learning:**

- Completes simple puzzles with different colors and shapes.
- Likes to listen to stories.
- Completes sentences and rhymes in familiar books.
- Points to or talks about familiar places or sights.
- Seeks new information with questions such as, "What is that?" or "Who is that?"
- Calls themselves by name.

#### **Thinking:**

- Recognizes a neighbor at a grocery store and wave or say "Hi."
- Uses familiar objects to represent other things such as using a block moving along the floor as a car or a piece of newspaper as a blanket.
- Looks for favorite toy where they left it last.
- Pretends to cook or eat imaginary food using pots, pans, or toy dishes.

#### **Problem-Solving:**

- Holds something in one hand while using the other hand; for example, holding a container and taking the lid off.
- Tries to use switches, knobs, or buttons on a toy.
- Plays with more than one toy at the same time, like putting toy food on a toy plate.
- Finds things even when hidden under two or three layers.



# Developmental Milestones

## 3 Years

### Social - Emotional

#### **Self-Regulation:**

- Recovers when upset by being comforted.
- Calms down within 10 minutes after familiar adult leaves, like at a childcare drop off.
- Follows simple routines when told, like helping to pick up toys when told, "It's clean-up time."
- Says "No" or shakes head when they don't want to do something or don't like something.
- Shows a wide range of emotions.
- Show ability to comfort self in some situations.
- Transitions from one activity to another.
- Understands the idea of "mine" and "his/hers".

#### **Relationship with adults:**

- Imitates tasks such as wiping the table when they see others doing the activity.
- Shows adults what they can do by saying, "Look at me!".

#### **Relationship with peers and Play Skills:**

- Notices other children and joins them to play.
- May share a favorite toy with another toddler who comes to visit.
- Imitates other children's play and emotions.
- Has a special friend or playmate.
- Shows interest or concern for others who are hurt by touching or talking to them.
- Shows affection for friends without prompting.
- Enjoys pretending (i.e. using a block as a phone).
- Beginning to take turns in play.

### Movement & Physical

#### **Gross-Motor:**

- Jumps forward with both feet at once.
- Climbs stairs using alternate feet.
- Likes to run, march or dance.
- Runs and stops without falling.

#### **Fine-Motor:**

- Strings items together, like large beads.
- Uses hands to twist things, like turning doorknobs or unscrewing lids.
- Turns book pages, one at a time.
- Uses scissors with help.
- Uses a crayon or marker to make scribbles or circles on paper.
- Is able to work toys with buttons, levers, and moving parts.

#### **Self-help:**

- Takes off and puts on some clothes by themselves, like loose pants or jacket.
- Pulls at pants or give other signs of needing to use the toilet.
- Begins to follow the steps of using the toilet with assistance.
- Holds hands under water to be washed.
- Picks up toys after playing or when hearing "Clean Up" song.
- Recognizes their own cubby to store personal items.

### Language & Communication

#### **Receptive:**

- Names things in a book when an adult points and asks, "What is this?"
- Says what action is happening in a picture or book when asked, like "running," "eating," or "playing".
- Says first name, when asked.
- Listens and starts to pick up toys when hears "Clean Up" song.
- Responds with actions or words to simple questions asking "Who?", "What?", or "Where?"
- Understands words and phrases associated with family life and their home language.

#### **Expressive:**

- Talks with adult in conversation using at least two back-and-forth exchanges.
- Asks "who," "what," "where," or "why" questions, like "Where is mommy/daddy?"
- Talks well enough for others to understand, most of the time.
- Uses -ing verbs like eating or running..
- Adds -ed to the end of words to talk about past actions, like looked or played.
- Says two or more words together, with one action word, like "Doggie run."
- Says words like "I," "me" or "we".

### Cognitive

#### **Learning:**

- Draws a circle, when shown how.
- Avoids touching hot objects, like a stove, when warned.
- Matches colors and shapes when sorting toys and other objects.
- Notices the difference between big and small.
- Arranges all the toy animals in a row and order some of them by size.
- Completes puzzles with three or four pieces.
- Knows three objects and their function (i.e. what do you see with, what do we do with a car or a key?).

#### **Thinking:**

- Talks about something that happened yesterday and remember places, people or activities.
- Plays make-believe with dolls, animals, and people.
- Draws a picture with crayons or markers and makes up a story about it.

#### **Problem-Solving:**

- Anticipates what is needed (e.g., bringing a tissue to a crying child).
- Uses several different ways to solve problems.
- Pretends to fix things using a toy hammer or screwdriver.
- Combines materials together to solve problems.



# Developmental Milestones

## 4 Years

### Social - Emotional

#### **Self-Regulation:**

- Makes connections between emotions and behavior.
- Changes behavior based on where they are (place of worship, library, playground).
- Demonstrates understanding the concept of sharing by attempting to share.
- Tells a familiar adult when they are happy, sad, afraid etc.
- Calls attention to what they can do.
- Initiates tasks independently.

#### **Relationship with adults:**

- Likes to be a "helper".
- Carries out actions to please adults at times.
- Is aware when an adult is happy or sad.

#### **Relationship with peers and Play Skills:**

- Would rather play with other children than by themselves.
- Asks to go play with children if none are around, like "Can I play with Alex?".
- Demonstrates socially acceptable behavior for teachers and peers (e.g. give hugs get a tissue sit next to a friend/teacher hold hands).
- Pretends to be something else during play.

### Movement & Physical

#### **Gross-Motor:**

- Can balance briefly on one foot.
- Goes up and down the stairs independently and alternating feet.
- Squats without falling.
- Walks in a straight line.
- Catches a large ball most of the time.

#### **Fine-Motor:**

- Holds crayon or pencil between fingers and thumb (not fist).
- Uses scissors to make cuts on a line.
- Holds the paper with one hand and draws with the other.
- Manipulates puzzle pieces with ease.
- Laces shoes.
- Draws a person with two to four body parts.

#### **Self-help:**

- Unbuttons some buttons.
- Serve themselves food or pour water, with adult help/supervision.
- Uses toilet independently.
- Dresses independently, may need help with zippers, snaps, buttons.
- Independently washes hands, with reminders.

### Language & Communication

#### **Receptive:**

- Answers simple questions like "What is a coat for?" or "What is a crayon for?".
- Answers open-ended questions.
- Follows directions that involve two - or three-step actions, which may not be related (e.g., "Please pick up your toys, and then get your shoes.>").
- Listens to others in group discussion for a short period, gain information through listening.

#### **Expressive:**

- Says sentences with four or more words.
- Says first and last name.
- Says some words from a song, story, or nursery rhyme.
- Talks about at least one thing that happened during her day, like "I played soccer.".
- Tells stories.
- Participates in conversations and interactions with peers and adults individually and in small and large groups.

### Cognitive

#### **Learning:**

- Asks to do simple tasks in the house (i.e. push broom, wipe table).
- Names a few colors of items.
- Participates in simple investigations of physical characteristics of living things. understands the idea of counting.
- Names some colors and some numbers.
- Matches items with two or more attributes (i.e. find the purple crayons).

#### **Thinking:**

- Draws a person with three or more body parts.
- Participates in complex, interactive play sequences with two or more children that include acting out/ negotiating roles.
- Asks "why?" but reject answers not to their liking.
- Remembers parts of a story.
- Tells what they think is going to happen next in a book.

#### **Problem-Solving:**

- Demonstrates willingness to explore new challenges, tasks.
- Plays board games or card games.



# Developmental Milestones

5 Years

## Social - Emotional

### **Self-Regulation:**

- Shows persistence when faced with challenging tasks and uncertainty seeking and accepting help when appropriate (e.g. saying to a friend "this is hard. Can you help me figure it out?").
- Brings a teacher-directed or self-initiated task activity or project to completion (e.g. showing the teacher "Look- I finished it all by myself!)
- Follows rules or takes turns when playing games with other children.
- Does simple chores at home, like matching socks or clearing the table after dinner.
- Wants to please people.
- Waits patiently for a teacher or adult's attention.

### **Relationship with adults:**

- Transitions into unfamiliar setting with the assistance of a familiar adults.
- Seeks guidance from family members, educators, familiar adults.

### **Relationship with peers and Play Skills:**

- Says "thank you", "please" and "excuse me."
- Shares, take turns, and cooperates in a group.
- Listens to other's ideas/wants; share own ideas/wants.
- Wants to be like friends.
- Is able to tell what's real and what's make-believe.

## Movement & Physical

### **Gross-Motor:**

- Participates in simple sequences of movement.
- Participates in a variety of dance and movement activities.
- Skips using alternating feet.
- Walks up and down the stairs while holding an object.

### **Fine-Motor:**

- Uses hands, fingers, and wrists to manipulate objects.
- Uses objects and props to develop spatial and coordination skills (e.g. throw and catch balls, Frisbees; twirl a hula-hoop about the hips; walk a balance beam lace; different sized beads and button and unbutton).
- Creates more recognizable representations.

### **Self-help:**

- Buttons some buttons.
- Serves themselves independently during mealtimes.
- Manages the contents of their backpack (e.g., taking out their folder, hanging on their hook after arrival).

## Language & Communication

### **Receptive:**

- Answers simple questions about a book or story after you read or tell it to them.
- Observes and interprets details about environment, events, or speakers.
- Responds to multi-steps directions or request (e.g., "First, wash your hands. Then bring me the green towel, and then we will have snack.")
- Understands forms of social speech from their family, culture, and community.
- Understands and uses location words, like behind, beside, and between.

### **Expressive:**

- Tells a story they heard or made up with at least two events and one main character. For example, a cat was stuck in a tree and a firefighter saved it.
- Keeps a conversation going with more than three back-and-forth exchanges.
- Uses or recognizes simple rhymes (bat-cat, ball-tall).
- Talks in different ways depending on place and listener.
- Produces grammatically correct sentences. Sentences are longer and more complex.
- Produces more constants correctly.

## Cognitive

### **Learning:**

- Counts to 10.
- Names some numbers between one to five when someone points to them.
- Pays attention for five to 10 minutes during activities (screentime does not count).
- Usually can write their own name.
- Names some letters when they are pointed to.

### **Thinking:**

- Begins to describe familiar people, places, things, events and sometimes detail.
- Uses a combination of drawings, dictation, scribble writing, letter strings or invented spelling to share information during play or other activities.
- Asks "how" things were made.

### **Problem-Solving:**

- Sticks with a problem-solving strategy that has been successful before
- With prompting and support, asks and answers key elements in a familiar story or poem.

# References

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2023, June 6). Important milestones: Your child by age. CDC. <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/milestones/index.html>
2. Early Intervention Technical Assistance. (2022). Developmental milestones: Story. EITA. <https://www.eita-pa.org/uploads/presentations/DevelopmentalMilestones/story.html>
3. New Jersey Department of Education. (2014, May 5). Professional standards for teachers: Alignment with InTASC. NJDOE. <https://www.nj.gov/education/profdev/standards/docs/ProfStandardsforTeachersAlignmentwithInTASC.pdf>
4. American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. (n.d.). Developmental milestones: Birth to 5 years. ASHA. <https://www.asha.org/public/developmental-milestones/>
5. New Jersey Department of Education. (2013). New Jersey Birth to Three Early Learning Standards. NJDOE. <https://www.nj.gov/education/earlychildhood/b3/docs/NJB3Standards.pdf>
6. The OT Toolbox. (2022, June 13). Fine motor milestones. Retrieved from <https://www.theottoolbox.com/fine-motor-milestones/>

We want to recognize our partners from Montclair State University, Center for Autism & Early Childhood Mental Health for their valuable contributions to the NJDOE OSE: Indicator 7 Developmental Milestones Resource.