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## UNIT 26 SETTING LONG TERM AND SHORT TERM GOALS

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### 26.1 INTRODUCTION

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In Unit 25, you have read about the elements of the curriculum. The first step in planning the curriculum is to identify what is it that you want the children to be able to do after they complete the ECE programme with you. So you have to identify the goals of the curriculum. In this Unit, you will read about how to identify the goals of the curriculum. Some examples of the goals you can lay down for children of different ages, are given in Annexure 1 at the end of the Block. You need not restrict yourself to comprehensive list of learning goals for children across various developmental domains listed in Annexure 1. You may also refer to the NIPUN Bharat (2021) and National Curriculum Framework for Foundational Stage (2022) (Reference of each has been provided in this Unit). Ultimately, all the documents intend to give you an overview of what children should be able to do in various developmental domains, provided they are nurtured in a supportive environment.

### Objectives

After reading this Unit, you will be able to:

- discuss the parameters that determine the goals of a curriculum;
- differentiate between long-term and short-term goals; and
- list out and incorporate goals for five domains of development for children in the age group of birth to 5+ years.

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## 26.2 HOW TO DECIDE UPON THE LONG-TERM OF THE CURRICULUM

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As mentioned earlier, the first step in planning the curriculum is to decide what is it that you want the children to achieve, once they complete the pre-primary programme at your centre. Usually, children stay in a pre-primary centre for one or two years. So we need to establish long-term goals which will help us to identify the concepts, skills and values that children will learn and acquire at the end of one /two years through their participation in the ECE programme.

How does the pre-primary teacher decide upon the goals of the curriculum? We make these decisions based on the following:

- a) Early learning standards or early learning outcomes frameworks
- b) Teacher's knowledge and beliefs about children and their development and learning
- c) Individual child's interests, needs, abilities and children's context
- d) The educational philosophy of the programme

Let us read about each of these in detail to understand how they help in deciding the goals of the curriculum.

### 26.2.1 Early Learning Standards/ Early Learning Outcomes Frameworks

**Early learning standards refer to the expectations we have regarding children's learning and development at different ages.** These standards describe what children of a particular age group are expected to know and can do in each of the developmental domains. In other words, these standards describe the developmental milestones that should be achieved by children of a particular age range across all domains of development.

Since the early learning standards/learning outcomes help teachers to know what to expect from children, they help in planning the goals of the curriculum, and identify indicators for assessment of children's progress. As you know from reading Unit 25, curriculum goals and assessment objectives are interrelated. What you want the children to learn is what you would teach and what you teach is what you will assess. For example, if the teacher knows from early learning standards that four-year-old children can carry out sequential thinking involving 3-4 sequences, then she can select this as her annual goal for her group of three-year-olds who will stay with her for one year. Next, she has to make sure that her curriculum content includes a variety of activities where children get opportunities to strengthen their ability to think in a sequence. For example, children can be asked to retell a story they have heard or identify what picture card should come next in the sequence of events. Then, the teacher would assess at regular intervals whether children are moving towards achieving this goal.

However, as an educator and ECE professional, you also need to be aware of the **difficulties associated with using early learning standards or learning outcomes frameworks to establish goals and assessment indicators**. Some of the challenges in using standards and outcome frameworks are the following:

- Early learning standards are what we expect children to be able to do if they have been provided with an optimal environment for growth and development. However, we know that many children come from disadvantaged environments. Their learning and development may be considerably behind the standards because their environment did not provide them with the necessary inputs. But when children's development does not match the standards, the teacher may think of the children as being 'deficient' rather than seeing their environment as being deficient. So the effect is that the use of the standards may lead to the children being labelled 'less' smart or 'more' smart than others.
- Another possibility is that the teacher/school may start treating standards as the **only** consideration while identifying the goals for their ECE programme and may see the standards as the only worthwhile goals to be achieved. They may be compelled to ensure that all children achieve the standards. This may lead the teacher to devalue or undervalue the other competencies or alternate knowledge the children have, which has not been mentioned or included under the standards and she may ignore this prior knowledge of children when planning learning experiences. She may become inflexible in her approach and may plan the same (standardized) learning experiences for all children, ignoring individual differences in children's abilities, interests and prior experiences. If the teacher does not take the time to properly understand the purpose behind the standards and does not learn how to use them appropriately, she may end up harming the children. To summarize, the standards are ideals to be reached but in the process of reaching these standards, children must not be put in situations where they are pressurized to achieve the goals, and looked down upon, if they lag behind others.
- Another issue in using early learning standards is that there are no universal early learning standards. Rather, many are available since different organizations and countries formulate their own standards. Governments of different countries, early childhood development professional organizations and associations, and even individual preschools/schools have developed their own early learning standards. Many countries where government bodies have developed their own standards expect preschools to follow those standards. Also, pre-primary centre that get accreditation from a particular ECCE professional organization are expected to follow the early learning standards set by that organization. There are commonalities and differences between these different early learning standards. Also, not all learning standards available are comprehensive. So, you need to ensure that the early learning standards you are following are comprehensive and developmentally appropriate. One way to do this is to follow only those standards which have been developed by the National or State Government or by reputed organizations working for children.

Recently in India, two documents have been put forward by the Government of India which describe the learning standards to be followed for the preschool age group. The first document is the NIPUN Bharat Mission Document which offers a comprehensive list of learning outcomes for children in preschool 1, preschool 2, preschool 3, Grade I and Grade II children. It lists learning outcomes for young children under three developmental Goals: a) Children maintain good health and well-being (HW); b) Children become effective communicators (EC); and c) Children become involved learners and connect with their immediate environment (IL). In the NIPUN Bharat document, the developmental domains are not explicitly listed, but these are covered under the three developmental goals.

The second document is National Curriculum Framework for the Foundational Stage (2022). This framework lists out learning outcomes for children in the age group of three to eight years under specific categories of five developmental domains – Physical; Social, Emotional, and Ethical; Cognitive; Language and Literacy; and Aesthetic and Cultural Development. Given below are the links to these documents:

a) NIPUN Bharat (Annexure I):

[https://www.education.gov.in/sites/upload\\_files/mhrd/files/nipun\\_bharat\\_eng1.pdf](https://www.education.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/nipun_bharat_eng1.pdf)

b) NCF for Foundational Stage (Chapter 2):

[https://ncert.nic.in/pdf/NCF\\_for\\_Foundational\\_Stage\\_20\\_October\\_2022.pdf](https://ncert.nic.in/pdf/NCF_for_Foundational_Stage_20_October_2022.pdf)

While some pre-primary centre have developed early learning standards for their own use which are holistic and cover all developmental domains, largely in our country, preschool education is not based on a sound understanding of children's development. Rather, the goal of pre-primary education is very limited – that of preparing children with the basics of reading, writing and arithmetic to prepare them for class I. This causes stress and pressure on children and their all-round development does not take place.

### **26.2.2 Teacher's Knowledge and Beliefs about Children's Development and Learning**

Teachers' knowledge and beliefs about children's development and how they learn are formed based on their own personal experiences, their value system, the beliefs about children in their culture, and the nature of the education and training programmes they have participated in.

You would remember from Course 1 that the behaviourist and constructivist perspectives regarding the development of thought in young children have widely different implications for the teaching and education of children. Teachers whose training programme is based on the behaviourist paradigm are likely to see themselves as holders of knowledge and children as empty vessels, who need to be filled with the knowledge teachers have. They are most likely to have been taught through the lecture mode and so are not familiar with using teaching methods like discussion, theatre, story narration which enable knowledge to be co-created between the teacher and the children. They will tend to use didactic teaching methods, where knowledge

is 'told' to children by lecturing and reading. Teachers will be doing most of the talking in such a classroom and children would be passively absorbing what is told to them, without asking too many questions. Pre-primary centres that solely focus on teaching children basic reading, writing and arithmetic to prepare them for class 1, are operating from a behaviouristic perspective.

Teachers who have experienced an education and training programme which is constructivist in its ideology will see children as active meaning-makers who create knowledge from their experiences. They will see their role as that of a facilitator and are more likely to plan learning activities based on children's prior learning and use teaching methods that give a greater role to children such as using questions, encouraging discussions, organizing field trips, drama, art and craft activities. Pre-primary centres that emphasize the holistic development of children in all domains will most likely be following a constructivist perspective to learning.

It may happen that while the teachers themselves have a constructivist perspective on how children learn, they may find themselves to be in a preschool that does not support their thinking. In such a situation, the challenge is for the teacher to try to bring about a change in her school environment rather than give in to the pressure of adopting the school's ideology.

Teachers should not only refer to the knowledge gained during their training (pre-service or in-service) to develop the goals, but also keep in touch with the latest thinking and research by reading books and using appropriate sites on the internet.

### **26.2.3 Individual Children's Abilities and Context**

You have read that while the early learning standards help us to know what children would be able to do at particular age given an optimal environment, there may be differences in the developmental level of children of the same age due to a variety of factors. Children from disadvantaged settings may be at a different developmental level when they enter a preschool as compared to those from a more favourable environment. The goals set for children must take into account these differences. The teacher may need to adapt the general goal, set for the whole group, for specific children keeping in mind their abilities and interests. For example, children who have not had much opportunity to listen to stories, or play with a variety of materials or verbally express their thoughts, may not be able to attain all the goals the teacher may have set for the language and cognition domain. Often, children from such environments may not be able to carry out sequential thinking, respond to questions that require prediction (such as what do you think will happen now) or carry out classification or seriation tasks. In such a situation, the teacher would need to assess whether the children have developed further with respect to their own earlier level, rather than comparing their performance with that of other children from advantaged environments. For example, the teacher may have set an annual goal that children will be able to identify complex patterns and be able to extend the pattern. In her group of 5-years-olds children, the teacher may have some children who may have never been exposed to examining and identifying patterns. It is possible that by the end

of one year these children may not be able to achieve the goal the teacher had set – ‘identify a complex pattern and extend it’ — but they can identify and copy a simple pattern.

So, while they may not have achieved the annual long-term goal the teacher developed for the entire group, they have progressed in terms of their own learning. If this is so, then it means that the children are learning and developing.

To summarize, what we mean is that while the teacher must aim for all children to attain the annual goals she has developed for the entire class, she may need to adapt the long-term goal for specific children. Further, she must not see a child as ‘inadequate’ if the child is presently unable to achieve the annual goal/goals set for the entire group.

#### **26.2.4 Educational Philosophy of the Programme**

Some pre-primary centre may be based on a certain educational philosophy or ideology. This may impact the goals teachers set for children. For example, a preschool based on the Montessori approach may not have to nurture children’s imagination as a goal because the Montessori philosophy does not encourage the development of fantasy in children. On the other hand, the development of self-help skills will be a priority goal in a Montessori preschool because developing practical life skills is highly valued in the Montessori approach. In Reggio Emilia preschools, the development of creativity, imagination, and aesthetic appreciation would be a significant goal as there is a lot of emphasis on children’s creative self-expression in this approach.

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### **26.3 SOME ANNUAL (LONG-TERM) GOALS FOR THE EARLY YEARS**

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In this Section, we have listed some long-term goals for children up to six years of age in five developmental domains. We have developed these goals by referring to the ‘Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework – Ages Birth to Five, 2015’, the National Curricular Framework for ECCE developed by the Government of India (2014), NIPUN Bharat document (2021) and research findings regarding how children develop at different ages in various developmental domains. We have divided the period birth to six years into two age groups- birth to 3 years, and 3 years to 5+ years and stated the long-term goals for these two age groups.

We have described goals for five domains of development:

- Social and Emotional Development
- Language and Literacy
- Cognition
- Physical and Motor Development
- Creativity and Aesthetic Appreciation

‘Sensory development’ has not been identified as a separate domain. Rather, aspects of sensory development have been integrated into the domains ‘Physical-Motor’ and ‘Cognitive’ Goals with respect to ‘Approaches to Learning’, which is identified as a distinct domain in some frameworks, and has been integrated with the domain ‘Social-Emotional Development’.

Within each domain, we have identified the components (aspects) of development in that domain, which we have referred to as sub-domains. For each sub-domain, we have identified the goals. These goals are broadly worded statements that help us to identify the concepts, skills and values that are associated with achieving the goal. For each goal, we have listed some of these concepts, abilities/ skills and attitudes/ values that young children should ideally acquire by 3 years and 5+ years of age. When children demonstrate these knowledge, concepts, skills and values, it shows that they have achieved that goal.

Figures 1 and 2 below show the sub-domains included in each of the domains. Some sub-domains are common for the birth to 3 age group and 3 to 5+ age group but some are different. This is because new sub-domains emerge as the child grows and develops.

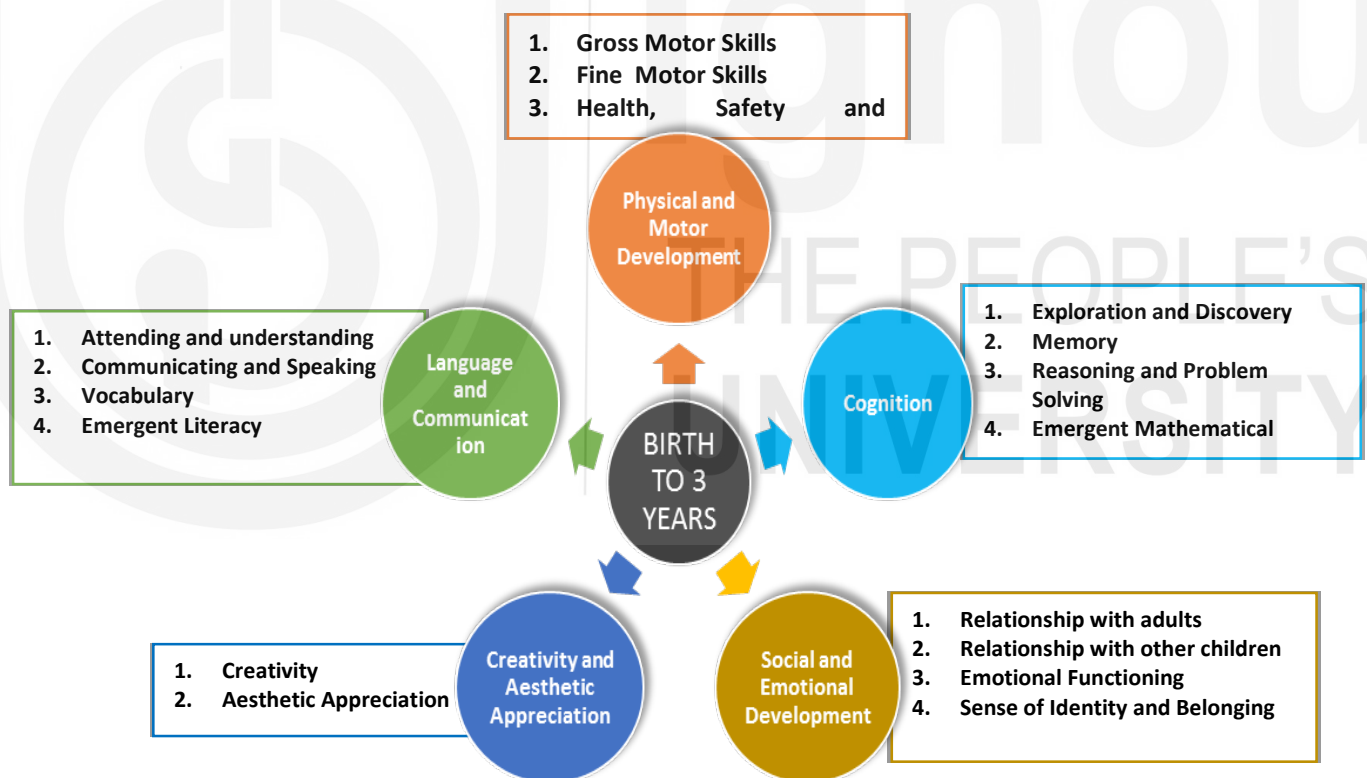


Fig. 1: Domains and Sub-domains for Birth to Three Years of Age

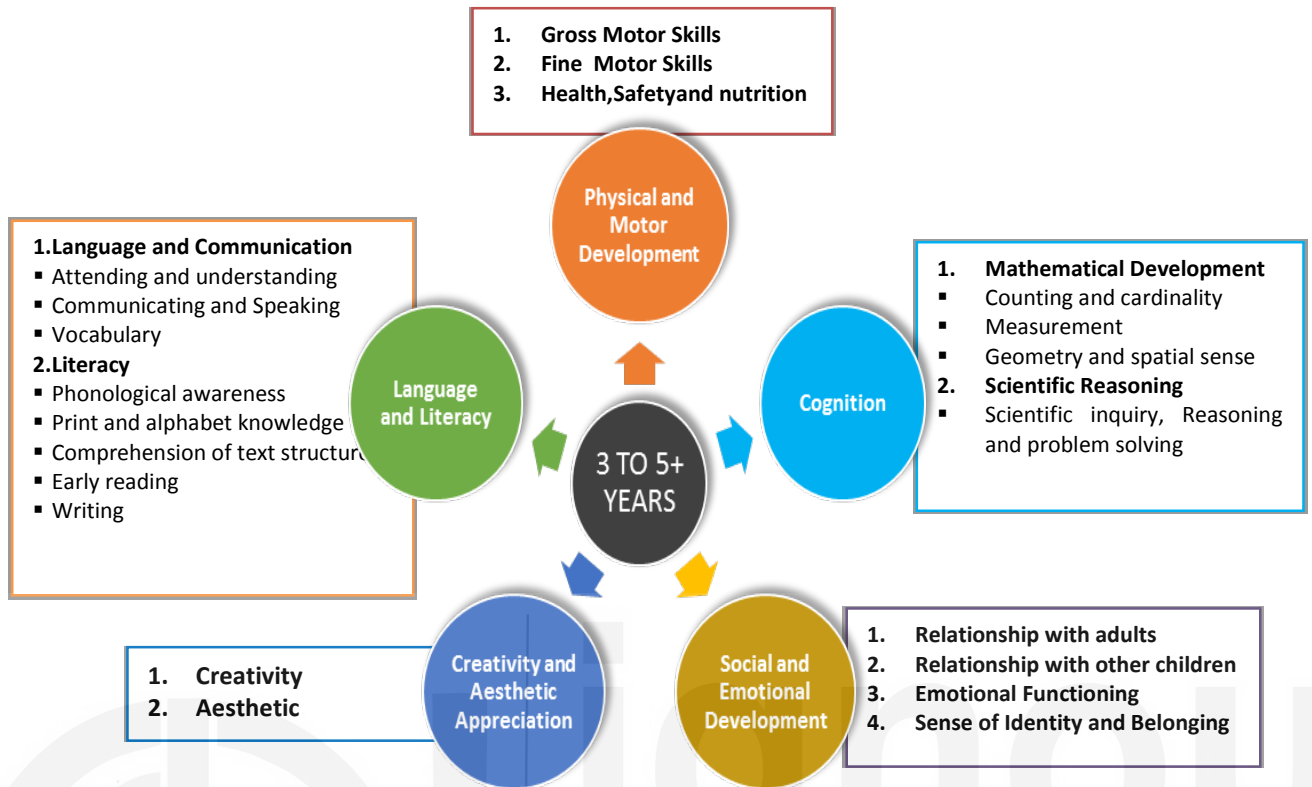


Fig. 2: Domains and Sub-Domains for Three Years to Five + Years

For each of the sub-domains in both the age groups (birth to three years, and three to five years), we have stated some long-term goals and the related concepts, skills and values that the child acquires through these goals. **These are provided in Annexure I at the end of the Block, after Unit 31.** You can refer to these while developing goals for your early childhood care and education programme. You can add other goals. Remember that:

- There are individual differences in children and some children may demonstrate these concepts, skills and values before the designated ages of 3 and 5+ and some may demonstrate them later.
- These goals are relevant for all children from all contexts including children with disabilities. Of course, depending upon the nature of the disability, the child may not be able to achieve all the goals or may achieve part of it or may achieve them at later ages than would children without disabilities.
- If the child is not able to reach a goal, the assessment should not lead you to conclude that a child has failed in any way. Remember that children come from different backgrounds and contexts. Do not label these children as 'less smart' or as 'failures' as this will cause the children and the others to have lower expectations of them and lower their self-esteem. This, as you know, works as a 'self-fulfilling prophecy'. As you have read, development is resilient. When children consistently get a loving and stimulating environment, they can make rapid gains and catch up with others.



- d) These goals can be used to engage and work with families. The various goals can be discussed with parents and their importance explained. The concepts, skills and values can be used by parents to identify the knowledge and skills their children are developing.

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## 26.4 SELECTING SHORT-TERM GOALS

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The long-term goals stated in Annexure I encompass a wide range of concepts, values and skills that the children would gain by the end of their participation in the ECCE programme. However, all these concepts, values and skills cannot be introduced to children at the same time. The logical approach is to first teach some concepts, values and skills, and once the children master these, then introduce them to another set of concepts, values and skills, building upon their earlier learning. So, the second step in planning is to derive more specific goals from these broadly stated long-term goals which state what the children will achieve in a shorter period of time, say one or two few months. These specific statements which specify the concepts, skills and values that children will achieve in a shorter period are referred to as **short-term goals**.

The purpose of laying down short-term goals is to make a conscious decision to focus on specific concepts, skills and values in a particular period so that all concepts, skills and values get balanced attention in our curriculum over the year.

You can plan short-term goals for four months, three-month period, two-month period, or one-month period, depending on your need.

### 26.4.1 Principles for Defining Short-Term Goals

**Following are some principles you should keep in mind when deciding which short-term goal should be selected at what time.**

- a) **Keep in mind that some concepts, values and skills form a hierarchy.** This means you have to learn the simpler concepts, values and skills first, before moving on to the more complex ones. Following are examples of certain concepts and abilities which always move in a particular order.

*Example A:* The child needs to first develop the skill of matching, only then will she be able to classify.

*Example B:* The child needs to first understand the concept of ‘more’ and ‘less’, then one-to-one correspondence, then seriation and only then will she be able to learn how to count.

*Example C:* Children should be first introduced to primary colors, then secondary colours, then shades of colours.

*Example D:* When introducing a concept, begin by providing the child with concrete experiences related to that concept, then pictorial and finally only words can be used. This is because words are abstract and make sense only after the child has actually had experiences with objects and seen and handled them.

*Example E:* The beginning of an academic year introduce concepts directly related to/about the child-like ‘my body’, ‘my family’, and as the year progresses the concepts covering the wider world can be introduced, such as neighbourhood garden, transport, etc.

- b) **Some concepts have no particular hierarchy.** For example, it does not matter if you first introduce ‘vegetables’ or ‘fruits’; we must recognize that many concepts should not be introduced together. Concepts should be introduced in phases or one after the other.
- c) **Some aspects of the curriculum, particularly the values, have to be continuously in focus.** As the opportunity presents itself, it must be reinforced. These are not confined to particular periods in the educational year. For example, values like sharing, waiting to take turns, and peaceful conflict resolution need to be reinforced whenever the opportunity arises. They are not restricted to just one or two months in the academic year.
- d) When we identify the short-term goals related to a long-term goal, it is possible that the short-term goals planned for months 3 and 4 are also shown by children in months 1 and 2. That is alright. The idea of making a short-term goal is that this particular goal will be the focus of our activity and interaction with children in those months. Also, the aim is that majority of the children, and ideally, all the children, achieve that short-term goal in the months for which it was planned. Of course, if children do not achieve the short-term goal in that duration, it will be extended to the next two months.
- e) Finally, when a short-term goal is achieved it does not mean that we will no longer plan activities related to that goal. As children learn new concepts and skills, the concepts and skills learnt earlier must continue to be part of the learning activities planned for children. So we can continue to plan activities related to earlier short-term goals too.

#### **26.4.2 Some Examples of Short-Term Goals**

**Following are some long-term goals along with their short-term goals for a period of four months.**

*Example 1: Long-term goal for gross motor development: Child demonstrates increasing control, strength and coordination of large muscles.*

The related **Short term goals for 4-5 years olds** that will help to achieve the above long-term goal are:

Months 1 and 2: Walks forward and backward with ease.

Months 3 and 4: Walks on a straight or curved circular line.

*Example 2: Long-term goal for social development: Children engage in and maintain positive interactions and relationships with other children, respecting their feelings and rights*

The related **Short term goals for 4-5 years olds** that will help to achieve the above long-term goal are:

Months 1 and 2: Requests for something which others have.

Months 3 and 4: Waits for the turn to play.

*Example 3: Long-term goal for cognitive development: The child matches objects and pictures by similar or related characteristics.*

The related **Short term goals for 3-year-olds** that will help to achieve the above long-term goal are:

Months 1 and 2: Matches similar objects: a toy car with another toy car.

Months 3 and 4: Matches objects with their pictures — a toy car with the picture of the toy car.

Months 5 and 6: Matches objects which are related, for example, socks with shoes.

*Example 4: Long-term goal for language development: The child expresses self in increasingly detailed ways and carries out complex interactions and conversations with others for a variety of purposes.*

The related **Short term goals for 3-year-olds** that will help to achieve the above long-term goal are:

Months 1 and 2: Uses complete sentences to express her needs and wants.

Months 3 and 4: Speaks about four sentences on a topic.

Once the long-term goals and the more specific short-term goals are clear in your mind, the next step is to plan the learning experiences for the child. Using approaches like thematic and emergent approaches, you will be able to identify the activities which would help in reaching the goals. You will read about these approaches for planning the content of the curriculum in detail in the subsequent two Units. Finally, once you know what activities you want to organize with children, you will need to plan the sequence of activities during the day. You will read about this in Unit 30 of this Block.

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## 26.5 SUMMING UP

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As one teaches young children, you need to determine what you expect as a result of that teaching. In other words, learning goals (long-term and short-term) need to be defined. To define these, the teacher may refer to the given aspects:

- a) Early learning standards or early learning outcomes frameworks
- b) Teacher's knowledge and beliefs about children and their development and learning
- c) Individual child's interests, needs, abilities and children's context
- d) The educational philosophy of the programme

In this Unit, some long-term goals for children up to six years of age in fine developmental domains have been listed. The five development domains are as follows: Social and Emotional Development; Language & Literacy; Cognition; Physical and Motor Development; and Creativity & Aesthetic Appreciation. These have been divided for the children from birth to six years into two age groups- birth to 3 years, and 3 years to 5+ years and stated the long-term goals for these two age groups.

In addition, specific statements which specify the concepts, skills and values that children will achieve in a shorter period are referred to as short-term goals. The purpose of laying down short-term goals is to make a conscious decision to focus on specific concepts, skills and values in a particular period so that all concepts, skills and values get balanced attention in our curriculum over the year. You can plan short-term goals for a four-month period, three-month period, two-month period, or one-month period, depending on your need.

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## 26.6 REFERENCES AND FURTHER READINGS

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