

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

What is Unique Learning System (ULS)?

Unique Learning System is a complete, dynamic curriculum program provided monthly for students with special learning needs. ULS comes in five grade bands: Elementary, Intermediate, Middle School, High School and Transitional. Each month a new thematic unit contains all the materials needed, including leveled reading books. The units are centered on a science or social studies topic and incorporate reading, writing, math, science and history. There are 29 monthly lessons in grade bands Elementary – High School, and 15 monthly lessons in the Transitional grade band. These lessons are aligned with content standards and differentiated into three levels of participation: Level 1 students, who require maximum support; Level 2 students, who require some support; and Level 3 students, who show the potential to learn and have the greatest amount of independence. Student profiles can be created to guide instruction. Online progress monitoring and much more is provided in this curriculum.

How is ULS aligned to standards?

The foundation for the Unique Learning System curriculum is built around the essence of Academic Content Standards. Instructional targets were developed for reading, writing, mathematics, science and social studies. From there, ULS built classroom activities that focus on these instructional target areas.

Is ULS aligned to my state standards?

Unique Learning System has built its' curriculum to align with state standards. To see how ULS lines up with your state standards, visit the state standards map on the Unique Learning System website, located under the Standards tab. If you have any additional questions regarding state standard alignment and ULS please call our office at (800-697-6575).

What grade band should I use with my class?

Each grade band is based on what should be taught at that age. Each grade band's material is modified, yet age appropriate. Choose the band that corresponds with the chronological age of your class. If you have students in two grade bands, pick the one that has the majority of students and use that for all. There is adequate overlap between the grade level bands to accommodate some grade differences.

My students are in an older grade but functioning at the Elementary level. Should I get the Elementary level?

No. You need the band that corresponds with the students' age, not their functioning level. Content within lessons and materials are all reduced in depth and breadth to accommodate special learning needs and the differentiated tasks will enable students to participate at any ability level.

I need more than one grade band. What should I do?

If you have students in more than one grade band, pick the one that has the majority of students and use that for all. There is an adequate overlap between the grade level bands to accommodate some grade differences.

What if I need to switch grade level bands?

If you find that you need to switch grade level bands, call us (800-697-6575) and we can easily switch them. Grade bands may be switched one time only.

Is ULS a universally designed program?

Unique Learning System is designed so that all students can participate in the same activity. Differentiated tasks are supported with multiple means of representation: including text, symbolized text and picture formats. Additionally, all leveled books and chapter books are provided in a text-reading format to support the text versions. All materials provide for multiple means of expression, including writing, selecting picture representations and verbal responses. Supports for augmentative communication are also included. Many of the skill applications are presented with real-world scenarios to increase the means for student engagement. All lessons and materials are carefully designed to address a universal format of learning for students with these special needs.

Can I Implement Response to Intervention (RTI) with ULS?

Our goal with Unique Learning System mirrors completely with those of RTI. We want to ensure that all students have access to the best instruction and learning opportunities. The Profile in ULS enables teachers to identify each student's present level as compared to a typically developing student. The Profile provides the suggested instructional level and instructional strategies. All lessons are differentiated so that all students can participate in the same activity at the same time. The Progress Monitoring provided with each unit guides instruction and ensures that the students are progressing. Because the units are based on social studies and science, instruction can be easily used in both the typical classroom and the special education classroom depending on the student's needs. ULS is built on research-based approaches. (See the research material on the ULS site.)

What subjects does ULS cover?

The monthly thematic units are centered on a science or social studies topic and incorporate reading, writing, math, science and history activities. The unit format provides a practical mode of delivery to assure that the student is provided with standards based learning experiences for optimal acquisition and generalization of skills and knowledge.

Why are the thematic units designed for a month of instruction?

The month-long unit format provides a practical mode of delivery to assure that the students receive optimal standards-based learning experiences for acquisition and generalization of skills and knowledge. Students engage in repeated application of unit vocabulary and skills. The unit format also provides multiple access points for addressing IEP goals and Alternate Assessment evidence/skill development.

How are the lessons differentiated?

Within each unit activity, it is essential that differentiated tasks are identified to assure that all students will have a defined means of participation. The differentiated tasks in each lesson plan are only suggestions, and teachers can use this as a springboard to extend their own differentiation for individual students. These three levels of differentiation are described in this way: Level 3 students may have shown the potential to learn to read and write within modified learning materials. These students will typically perform tasks with the greatest degree of independence. Level 2 students may require various supports to participate in learning activities, yet have potential to learn and apply skills. Students at level 1 require maximum support. Increasing the level of participation through consistent responses may be the main objective for students at this learning level. The lessons are designed to include all students in the same activity.

How do ULS and News-2-You work together?

Both products, News-2-You and Unique Learning System, are built around the same instructional targets, which align to academic content standards. Many of the materials have a similar format and all use the SymbolStix graphics to support learning materials. Monthly, N2Y, Inc. publishes a correlation document that provides suggestions for the weekly newspapers integration into the ULS daily plans. News-2-You also makes an effort to provide relevant news that correlates with the monthly ULS theme in both the weekly newspaper and the daily World News.

What symbols are used in ULS and how can I get them?

The symbol set used at N2Y, Inc. for both News-2-You and Unique Learning System is SymbolStix. This symbol set was developed to symbolize current events, rather than based on a word list. The set grew over the years to a set that now has over 12,000 symbols. Numerous companies have licensed SymbolStix for their products and software. Presently, two products are available for consumers to have access to the symbols. N2Y, Inc. offers SymbolStix ONLINE, an online subscription that gives access to all the symbols in the library. This license allows individuals to use the symbols in other software or programs for classroom or personal use. They cannot sell materials made with these symbols without an agreement with SymbolStix, LLC. Tobii-ATI® has a product called SymbolMate® which allows you to create printed communication boards and educational materials. SymbolMate uses SymbolStix as their default library. Materials made with these symbols cannot be sold without an agreement with SymbolStix, LLC.

My students are all severe-profound. Will this content work for them?

Yes. Level 1 students are defined as students that need maximum support within instructional tasks. For these students, increasing the level of active participation is the main objective within the educational program. The lesson format within ULS provides content and situations that enable students to meaningfully participate. Each lesson is differentiated for all levels so that all students can participate in the same activity at the same time.

How can this program support our state's Alternate Assessment process?

Each state has a defined Alternate Assessment process that is aligned to the state's achievement standards. This process requires that students are educated within areas of standards that will be assessed. To see how ULS lines up with your state's Alternate Assessment process, visit the state standards map on the Unique Learning System website, located under the Standards tab.

Is this program appropriate for students with mild disabilities?

Yes. Unique Learning System is appropriate for some students who require content learning that is reduced in depth and breadth from that of the general education classroom and may be participating in the state's alternate assessment process. ULS materials may be incorporated in resource room and inclusionary settings for many students. For a student who has been identified with mild disabilities, the IEP team should consider the curriculum and setting that is appropriate for the individual student.

What happens after the three-year cycle of unit topics?

The three year cycle was incorporated because most teachers of students with significant disabilities have students for at least three years. Additionally, it takes about three years to cover all the topics within the science and social studies content. We do not want to teach students the same thing year after year. The three year cycle gives new information each year. That being said, most teachers do have the advantage of reusing all the additional, creative content they have prepared for these units. The years will be repeated with upgraded materials to correlate with research and requirements. We hope to expand the information, resources, etc. more and more yearly.

We are required to show progress with our students through data. Does ULS have tools to do this?

Yes. Unique Learning System has both a Student Profile and Checkpoints to assess the content that is presented in the monthly units. The Profile provides a present level of the students' reading, writing, math, and access and participation skills. The Profile yields a suggested differentiation level for the student. When the profile is repeated after a period of instruction, progress can be reported in this differentiation level. The Checkpoints assess the reading, math and content understanding from the unit. This can be administered as a pre and post assessment tool. All data is stored on the site so that updating is easy and progress can be

easily seen. Larger groups have a free administrative access that can view all the grade bands and student progress within a district or program.

Are there overlay setups for Classroom Suite, Clicker or other technologies with the Unique Learning System program?

Many resources are cited for each unit on our site. Many of the existing activity sites have numerous activities posted weekly that are Unique Learning System and News-2-You specific. N2Y, Inc. hopes to have some sort of activity exchange soon.

I need a Reading and Math curriculum; this is only focused on Social Studies and Science. Why?

The units are based on a science or social studies topic, but incorporate reading, writing, math, science and history activities. The unit format provides a practical mode of delivery to assure that the student is provided with standards-based learning experiences for optimal acquisition and generalization of these skills and knowledge.

It costs too much to print. Do you offer a printed version?

Most of the materials will need to be prepared specifically for students' needs. For example, some books may need to be laminated on card stock so a student can turn pages or need to be replaced because of torn pages. You will have to build some printing into the cost; however, much of the unit does not need to be printed in color. Over time, you will develop your own method of teaching these units and can adjust the amount of printing you need to do. Also, white boards provide a wonderful means of teaching this interactive material.

Can I have access to the first year materials?

We do have the first year available on CD (\$179 per band); however, this does not include online profile, progress monitoring, tools and resources features.