

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

What is Unique Learning System (ULS)?

ULS is a complete, dynamic curriculum program for students with special learning needs. ULS comes in four grade bands: (Elementary, Intermediate, Middle School and High School) and is delivered monthly. Each month a new monthly thematic unit and contains all the materials needed including leveled reading books. The units are centered on a science or social studies topic and incorporate reading, writing and math. There are 27 monthly lessons in each grade band which are aligned with content standards and differentiated into three levels of participation (Level 1 students require maximum support, Level 2 students require some support and Level 3 students 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 ULS 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?

We are presently preparing documents for each state that shows state standard alignment, as well as support for state Alternate Assessment processes. Many states are completed. Call our office if you need these documents (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 breath 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 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. You can only do this one time.

Is ULS a universally designed program?

ULS is designed so that all students can participate in the same activity. Differentiated tasks are supported with multiple means of representation, including text, symbolized 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 design for learning for students with these special needs.

Can I implement Response To Intervention (RTI) with ULS?

Our goal with ULS 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 ensures that the students are progress and guides instruction. 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 based on research-based approaches. (See the research material on the ULS site.

What subjects does ULS cover?

The monthly thematic unites are centered on a science or social studies topic and incorporate reading, writing and math 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 one 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 does ULS and News-2-You work together?

Both products, N2Y and ULS, 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 publishes a correlation document that provides suggestions for the weekly newspapers integration into the ULS daily plans. News-2-You is also attempting (as much as is possible) 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 ULS 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 where we now have over 11,000 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 offers 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 as 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.

Is this program appropriate for students with mild disabilities?

Yes, 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 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 the same 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 the ULS have tools to do this?

Yes, ULS 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 set-ups for Classroom Suite, Clicker or other technologies with the Unique program?

Many resources are cited for each unit on our site. Many of the existing activity sites have numerous activities posted weekly that are ULS and News-2-You specific. N2Y 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 and math 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 print 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. Much needs only the teacher copy of teacher instruction. 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. The price is \$179 per unit band or \$1,290 for all 8 units of a chosen band. However, this does not include an online profile, progress monitoring, tools and resources features.