

GENERAL COMMENTS REGARDING CURRICULUM LADDERS™

A. Explanation of Ladders:

1. There are three levels represented on the ladders. The Inventory Levels (in red) encompass the largest number of curriculum skills and concepts. The Screening Levels (in white) break into smaller portions what is covered in the Inventory Levels. The Item Levels (in blue) further breakdown the screening levels into specific skills and concepts.

As we move from larger to smaller amounts of curriculum information (from Inventory to Screening to Item) the color code shifts from red, to white, to blue. This color code should serve as a memory helper since this is a familiar color sequence.

2. An example is given for each Item identified on the ladder.
3. A performance objective statement starts at the bottom of each ladder. The statement is completed by adding each item from the ladder. [For example, "Our students will be able to spell accurately and efficiently: ai words (nail, sail)"]
4. To complete the performance objective we must have a criteria of what is accurate and efficient performance that we use to determine when a student is minimally proficient at a given skill or concept level. The independent levels for each curriculum area (note guide sheets) are the criteria we use to determine a student's minimum level of accuracy and efficiency. After a student has achieved the independent guides at one level we move to a new instructional skill or concept level.

A student should no longer require instruction at a level where he has achieved the independent level. However, continued practice will likely be necessary if he is to retain the information. Of course, if the skill or concept is a functional one practice will occur due to use in day to day living.

5. The assumption is made that for a student to be minimally proficient in a given curriculum area she should have mastered (based on the independent level criteria) all the items identified on the ladder.
6. Of course, some students will be functioning below a given curriculum ladder and some will be functioning above it depending on their present level of skill or concept development.
7. The ladders are not an attempt to designate an appropriate or desired sequence of skill or concept introduction. However, an attempt has been made to place skills and concepts requiring less knowledge at the bottom and those requiring increased knowledge higher up the ladder.

B. Reasons for Development of Ladders:

1. To provide a standard reference that will assist in reporting student progress, programming computer summaries and cross — referencing available instructional and motivational procedures and materials.
2. To focus on the distinction between functional long-term behavior and those behaviors and procedures we teach in building the long-term behavior. For example, letter sound knowledge (sound-symbol relationships) and blending in reading are not long term goals of instruction but rather they serve as building blocks in learning to read words. Once a student learns to read words he continues to do this on a long-term basis in daily life.

Only functional long-term behaviors are indicated on the ladders. Those behaviors and procedures, such as letter - sound knowledge and blending, are identified as instructional procedures for the long-term behaviors and are then keyed to the appropriate level on the ladder through an instructional cross-referencing system.

3. The three level arrangement of the ladders (i.e. Inventory, Screening, and Item) help us break away from lock stepping large numbers of students through the same amount of curriculum information, in a particular sequence, merely because a publisher has arranged the curriculum in this way.

By following the student instead of the curriculum we find that different students (and the same students at different times): (1) assimilate varying amounts of information, (2) in different sequences and (3) at different rates. (For example in a given class we may have students at Inventory, Screening and Item levels; some who began work near the top of the ladder, some in the middle and some near the bottom and each assimilating information at their own pace.)

4. To provide a visual curriculum - area overview to assist teachers, administrators, students and parents in conceptualizing the behaviors encompassed in a specific curriculum area.
5. By placing the performance objective statement at the bottom of each ladder, we eliminate the need to re-write objectives which only vary by two or three words.

C. Use of Ladders:

1. Use as a vehicle to assist us in moving from a grade - level system to a non grade-level system. The ladders focus our attention on where a student is on a given curriculum ladder rather than what he "should" be learning because he is in a specific grade.
2. The ladders can serve as an alternative to interpretative reporting systems, such as letter grades, Satisfactory and Unsatisfactory, etc. We can merely describe the student's progress in terms of what skills or concepts she has mastered during the reporting period.
3. Use as a standard reference to cross—reference various instructional and motivational procedures and materials. (Cross—referencing lists are presently under development through Unique Curriculums.)
4. Diagnostic performance materials which coordinate with all levels represented on the ladders are presently being field tested. We use these materials to identify an appropriate instructional level (following the guide sheets) for the student.

Once we have identified the student's instructional level we can immediately locate a resource of material and procedure alternatives for teaching at this level by consulting our cross-referencing lists.