

Pyramid Educational
Consultants of Australia
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www.pecs.com

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Welcome from Pyramid Australia's Clinical Director, Sophie Kerr

Who can believe it's already March 2011? No doubt by now all of our students are settling into school, some more successfully than others. The new school year will bring a range of challenges for many of our students, their parents and their teachers. This issue of our newsletter is bursting; with photos from our January PECS Intensive Program, information about teaching critical communication skills to make the school year easier than ever, product offers and the answer to one of our most frequently asked questions

We would love to include some of our readers' magic moments in our next edition, so please send your stories to ncullen@pecs.com.

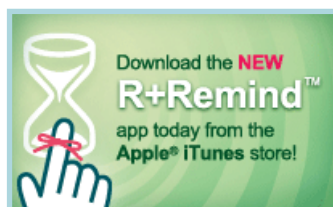
R+ Remind™

Pyramid Educational Consultants is thrilled to announce the release of our newest app for use on Apple® iPhone and iPad, R+ Remind™! This app is perfect for use in busy classrooms to remind all staff to catch your learners "being good"! It was created using research in Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) and from extensive input from busy educators. R+ Remind™ is a quick and easy way to help educators remember to reinforce good behaviour. R+ Remind™ is now available and can be purchased through Apple® iTunes App Stores worldwide for download on your iPhone, iPad or iPod Touch.

Included Features:

- Choose from 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 10 and 15-minute intervals
 - Unique sound for each interval
- Tones are variable within each interval
 - Option to skip to the next interval
 - Pause feature
- Countdown to next interval- glance at the screen to know when the next tone will sound
 - Vibrate option for iPhone users

To use R+ Remind™, simply open the app, select the average interval time desired and tap "start." A tone unique to each interval sounds at a variable rate so that you can pause what you're doing and reinforce a new behaviour, the lack of a targeted behaviour or even an existing behaviour. Each tone is activated on a randomised, variable schedule (the 3-minute tones sounds on average every 3 minutes). R+ Remind™ allows the user to choose from 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 10 and 15-minute intervals and includes a countdown, allowing the user to glance at the screen to know when the next tone will sound.



To purchase R+ Remind™, please visit the
Apple® iTunes App Store and search for
"R+ Remind"

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Intensive Program January, 2011

January 10th – 14th saw Pyramid holding another Intensive Program for 5 young students on the autism spectrum. We were lucky enough to have 2 fantastic volunteers to assist in the running of the program. Shigeru Haramaki and Kyoko Mondri from Pyramid Japan also joined us for 4 days to gain an insight into how our Intensive Programs are run. We wish them luck in running their first Intensive Program in Japan, which is planned for July/August 2011.

Across the week our 5 students made excellent progress within the PECS protocol and learning other critical communication skills. Our students worked on PECS phases I-IV and attributes, requesting for help, accepting and rejecting items, single picture direction following and wait. Due to the amount of rain across the week it was difficult to find a time for our students to engage in outdoor play. Luckily our creative staff were able to provide activities such as a music lesson, cooking, art, free play and sensory play to keep our students motivated to communicate.

Our January Intensive Program would not have been possible without the generous support of Yarraville Special Developmental School. The school's principal, Allan Cleland, was kind enough to allow Pyramid to utilise the school's newly built 'life skills' and physio classrooms. Pyramid will be providing a 'Help! I can't Wait for a Break: Teaching Critical Communication Skills' workshop for the entire staff of the school as a thank you for their generosity.



Upcoming PECS Intensive Programs

South Australia: April 17th to 21st, 2011

Victoria: July 11th to 15th, 2011

Darwin: July 11th to July 15th, 2011**

Please contact Erin Hobbin at ehobbin@pecs.com or on 03 9314 5374 to register your interest.

** Darwin Intensive Program will be conducted by **Lori Frost (co-developer of PECS) and Sophie Kerr (Clinical Director of Pyramid Australia)**

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✓✓✓ Full marks for PECS ✓✓✓

PECS has the highest positive rating on www.researchautism.net

Each intervention on this website is rated according to the amount and quality of scientific evidence which has been published in peer-reviewed journals that supports or does not support the effectiveness of that intervention.

You can see these interventions and their ratings at:

www.researchautism.net

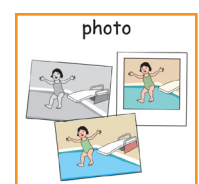
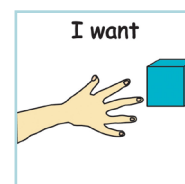
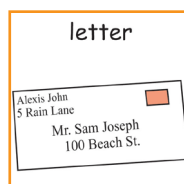
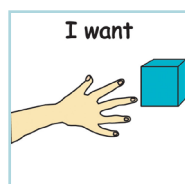
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"SUBSCRIBE" to ncullen@pecs.com**

you can also find us on Facebook, and subscribe to our RSS Feed
where we post news on a regular basis

just click on the relevant icon in the side bar

Do you have a question, would you like advice?

Sophie will be answering a new question in each newsletter.
Please send an email to Narelle at ncullen@pecs.com
if you have a question you would like answered.



We would love to hear from you! Please send in stories, photos or
comments you would like to share in future newsletters.

Email to: ncullen@pecs.com

If you have any general questions, or would like to provide feedback
about our newsletter, please contact Erin Hobbin at ehobbin@pecs.com,
or on 03 9314 5374

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The Role of Functional Communication Skills

Starting the new school year can be challenging for many of our students, as well as their parents and teachers. Some of the key issues that arise at the beginning of a new school year include, dealing with the change in routine and generalising PECS and other communication skills to a new classroom, teacher, teacher assistant, peers, activities and materials. Making the transition to the new school year as seamless (and painless) as possible for your students and those living and working with them should be a key goal. Before considering curriculum goals, there are a range of functional skills that can be introduced that will set students up for success, independence and pre-empt, and hopefully prevent, the emergence of a range of contextually inappropriate behaviours. The critical communication skills provide students with ways of communicating their way out of almost any situation. Teaching the early phases of the PECS protocol also provides the foundation for moving into commenting lessons. Commenting lessons provide a vehicle for expanding students' vocabulary and language within the classroom. Before beginning to teach any skill, it is important that the educational environment is set up for success. The Pyramid Approach to Education provides information about how to achieve this goal. Using the Pyramid to set up and review the educational environment will allow teaching staff to ensure that students are provided with the best opportunity to acquire new functional skills. Some of the key considerations are provided in the table on the following page.

The beginning of the school year is a great time to review both student and teacher skills within the use and teaching of PECS. Set up some simple requesting lessons to review each student's PECS skills. This will remind students that communicating with teaching staff is reinforcing. It will also set up the students with the expectation that communication is part of every day at school. The student skills checklist on our data forms CD will allow teaching staff to quickly note which skills have been maintained and which may require additional teaching. Also utilise this checklist to review each of the critical communication skills, i.e. requesting for assistance, requesting for a break, yes/no, wait, following directions, schedule following and transitioning. If your students have not yet learned these skills, they are a great place to start for functional communication goals and proactive behaviour management. For students who have communication difficulties, it is appropriate to prioritise this skill area. While targeting the range of functional communication skills, teaching students the routines of the school day is another key target. Students who learn how to follow the routines within the school environment are able to function more independently. In addition, when students have mastered routines such as unpacking and packing their school bag, collecting materials for a lesson, transitioning to classes such as art and PE, getting ready for meals and grooming, it is possible to sabotage these routines to teach further communication lessons. After students have learned to efficiently request for items that they want and the additional critical communication skills, it is possible to use PECS as a tool to teach most other curriculum-based vocabulary and language concepts. When introducing additional language to students, always consider the most functional way for the student to use the concepts being taught. Whenever possible begin teaching a concept through the requesting function. Find places where the concept you want to teach is already important for your student, e.g. teaching long/short in attributes because your student likes to wear long socks, only eats long noodles and prefers colouring with short crayons. Alternatively, make the concept important for your student, e.g. place their favourite book on top of the book shelf and a non-preferred book under the book shelf, to gain access to their favourite book teach the student to specify location using prepositions.

For more information on teaching the 9 Critical Communication Skills, review Chapter 11 of the PECS Training Manual and consider attending our new workshop *Teaching Critical Communication Skills: Help! I Can't Wait for a Break.... and more*

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Continued... The Role of Functional Communication Skills

Element of the Pyramid	Consider...
Functional Activities	Is this the most appropriate activity to teach this concept? Are real materials being used? Does the activity match the students 'real life' experience?
Powerful Reinforcers	Have all teaching staff been Grandma? Is the activity reinforcing for each student? Do any students require additional reinforcement? Have schedules of reinforcement been identified for each student?
Functional Communication	How does each student currently communicate the 9 critical skills? Is this appropriate? Which communication skills should be prioritised? How will each communication skill be incorporated across all activities during the school day?
Contextually Inappropriate Behaviours	Are there any behaviours of concern? Has ABC data been collected? Has a function been identified? Have Functionally Equivalent Alternative Behaviours (FEABs) been identified? Has a plan for teaching FEABs been developed? Has a reactive strategy been identified and staff trained in its implementation? Can any functional communication skills be taught to prevent the likelihood of further CIBs arising?
Generalisation	Are these students strong generalisers? Will lessons need to be set up to ensure generalisation of skills? Has a plan for generalising new skills been identified?
Lesson Types	Do all staff know which skills are discrete and which are sequential? Do all staff understand that each skill taught may be teacher led or self-initiated by student?
Teaching Strategies	Do all staff have knowledge of the types of prompts that can be used? Do all staff know how to shape a behaviour effectively? Are all teaching staff aware of how to choose a prompt? Are all teaching staff aware of how to fade prompts and avoid prompt dependency?
Error corrections	Can all staff use a 4 step error correction appropriately? Can all staff use a Backstep error correction appropriately?
Data Collection	Are all staff aware of the reasons that data needs to be collected? Have all staff received training in filling out the data sheets to be used? Has time been set aside to review and analyse the data that is collected?

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Featured Products

Read Sophie's article "The Role of Functional Communication Skills" on pages four and five for information on using the following products.

Complete Visual Reinforcement System Set

This set provides learners with a visual reminder of reinforcers available for staying on task and focusing on the lesson. Two sizes of reinforcement (token) systems are included. When first introducing the system it is recommended to begin with the larger size (15cm x 12cm). Both sizes start with just one token (and increase to five). An informative brochure outlining how to use the Visual Reinforcement System will accompany your order.

Each set of reinforcer cards comes complete with Velcoins® (both hook and loop). You may use any type of token you deem appropriate for your learners. Also included are 10 break cards, one wait card, and one help card.

(Tokens and pictures not included.)



Complete Visual Reinforcement System Set:

\$AUD63.00 (inc GST)
\$NZD79.00 (inc GST)



Schedule Board Kit

Add pictures, and our popular, easy-to-use Schedule Board Kit has everything you'll need to create a student schedule.

The 101cm x 15cm very durable board has a Velcro® strip running down the entire length of the middle, a "Current Activity" section at the top, and a roomy "Finished" box at the bottom.

We include two plastic cards that correspond to two 21cm by 28cm colour-coded choice boards.

The kit includes detailed directions on the Pyramid Approach to teaching picture-based direction following and using a schedule.

Schedule board, choice boards and cards may vary in colour. Pictures not included.

Schedule Board Kit

\$AUD79.00 (inc GST)
\$NZD99.00 (inc GST)

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Upcoming Workshops

To register and pay for our workshops online, please visit our [Training](#) page at www.pecs.com. You can also register for our workshops by downloading a registration form from our [Forms & Applications](#) page, and sending it in to the Pyramid office by fax, mail or email.

Melbourne	PECS Basic Training	5th & 6th May, 2011
Mildura	PECS Basic Training	12th & 13th May, 2011
Sydney	PECS Advanced Training	16th & 17th May, 2011
Sydney	PECS Basic Training	30th & 31st May, 2011
Sydney	Teaching Critical Communication Skills	1st June, 2011
Adelaide	PECS Basic Training	3rd & 4th June, 2011
Melbourne	SoSAFE! Training	6th June, 2011
Adelaide	PECS Advanced Training	17th & 18th June, 2011
Alice Springs **	PECS Basic Training	27th & 28th June, 2011

** Alice Springs workshop will be sponsored by Autism NT.
Please contact Autism NT directly for additional information ([Tracey Myles - antservices@autismnt.org.au](mailto:TraceyMyles-antservices@autismnt.org.au))



PECS Training Manual (Second Edition) - Translations

In addition to English, our PECS Training Manual (Second Edition) is available in the following languages:



Italian



French



Greek



Spanish



Japanese



Brazilian
Portuguese

Pyramid also plans to translate our PECS Training Manual into Russian, German, Arabic, Korean and Chinese in the near future.
If you would like to purchase the manual in any of the above translations, please contact ncullen@pecs.com

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Upcoming Outreach Consultation Dates

Mildura: 14th May, 2011

Sydney: 18th May, 2011

Adelaide: 6th June, 2011

Adelaide: 16th June, 2011

For further information, please contact Erin at ehobbin@pecs.com
A complete list of 2011 Outreach Consultation Dates is available at www.pecs.com

Ask Sophie a Question...

Q: *My student has previously used PECS but for various reasons the system was not maintained. We are about to reintroduce PECS, where should we start?*

A: I would almost always re-start a student back at Phase I of PECS. The student skills checklist on the PECS data forms CD is always useful when reviewing PECS skills or re-introducing PECS to a student. There is nothing to lose by going back to the beginning of PECS and ensuring that your student has the core skills required to use the system. If the student remembers what they previously learned within PECS, they will demonstrate this when the first lessons are presented. Quickly review each phase ensuring that you correct any errors as they arise. Any skills that have been forgotten since the initial training of PECS can be retaught as required. 'Starting up where you left off' can cause a range of issues. Probably the most common is PECS refusal due to the significant increase in demands in a short period of time.

Pyramid Educational Consultants of Australia have now moved!!

Our new contact details are as follows:

Mail: 413 Blackshaws Road, Altona North, VIC, 3025

Phone: +61 3 9314 5374

Fax: +61 3 9314 8692

Web: www.pecs.com

Our office is open Monday to Friday 8:00am to 4:30pm.
Please feel free to drop in to see our products, or to have a chat to
Erin about any of our services.

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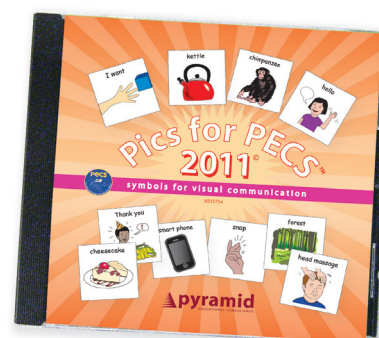
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Pics for PECS™ 2011 CD

Our Pics for PECS™ images support both expressive and receptive AAC systems and are appropriate for all ages. In addition to making pictures for PECS Communication Books, Pics for PECS™ can be used to create printed communication boards, schedules, literacy activities, visual supports and overlays for speech generating devices. The high resolution jpeg images can be enlarged to a full page with no loss of clarity and can be used in any software that supports jpeg images. This year, we continue to expand the range of our global pictures, so included in the over 200 new images, you'll find 'espresso', 'espresso cup' and 'wasabi'. We also added pictures for your calendars and more images for health-related activities. Included on the CD are directions for use and a complete picture dictionary of all the images.

Please contact us at ncullen@pecs.com for availability in Spanish, French, Italian, German and Japanese.



Pics for PECS™ 2011 CD

\$AUD55.00 (inc GST)

\$NZD70.30 (inc GST)

Pics for PECS™ 2011 Upgrade®

available for download at www.pecs.com



Pics for PECS™ 2011 Upgrade®

\$AUD18.00 (inc GST)

\$NZD20.50 (inc GST)

Do you have the Pics for PECS™ 2010 CD and want access to the latest images included on the Pics for PECS™ 2011 CD? Get the newest Pics for PECS™ images for a fraction of the price in just a matter of minutes! The upgrade includes over 200 new images to complete your Pics for PECS™ collection. Some new images in the 2011 upgrade include 'espresso', 'espresso cup', 'wasabi', 'smart phone', 'reflection' and 'headache'. The package includes the new 2011 images, a comprehensive picture dictionary and wordlist. This product is available for download only and is great for customers who currently own the Pics for PECS™ 2010 CD and wish to purchase only the newest 200+ images. Only available with credit card/PayPal purchases.

Our Velcro® products are now available in bulk quantities:

Velcoins® by the roll (1200 velcro dots) - Hook or Loop

\$AUD85.00 (inc GST) / \$NZD97.75 (inc GST)

Velcro® strips by the roll (50 metres) - Hook or Loop

\$AUD85.00 (inc GST) / \$NZD97.75 (inc GST)