

Newsletter - Issue 07: September 2011

Pyramid Educational
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Welcome from Pyramid Australia's Clinical Director, Sophie Kerr

Who can believe it's already time for another edition of our newsletter! This issue is packed full of useful information. Rebecca Wright our speech pathologist consultant has written a fantastic article on PECS and speech development. In addition you'll find all the usual useful information about Pyramid's products and services.

PECS Overview Seminar

On the 28th of May, we held a free PECS Overview at Northern School for Autism. The PECS Overview is a 3 hour mini-workshop which provides the basic information about the Pyramid Approach to Education and PECS. On the day we had several lucky door prizes and gave away a free place at a PECS Basic Workshop and Pics for PECS CDs.

A special thanks to Anastasia Hueston, Anna Rigona and other staff from Northern School for allowing us to use the school's new professional learning rooms and ensuring that we had everything we needed on the day. If you would like us to hold a PECS overview in your area, please contact Erin Hobbin on 03 9314 5374 or ehobbin@pecs.com

PECS - What do the Data Say?

"The Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) - What Do the Data Say?" article was the most downloaded article in 2009 and 2010 from Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities - one of SAGE's Online Journals. This article was written by Beth Sulzer-Azaroff with Anne Overcash and Catherine Horton as well as Andy Bondy and Lori Frost. The article was noted as "A SAGE 2010 most downloaded article" among their 600 online journals.

You can read the abstract to this article by visiting our PECS Related Publications Page at <http://www.pecsaustralia.com/research.php> (Article number 85).

To read the full article free, please click the link below

A SAGE 2010
most downloaded
article*

*Of articles published in SAGE
journals in 2009 and 2010

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Picasso, Meet the Micro-raptors

By Megan Clarke

St Lucy's School in Sydney has been working on integrating PECS into the classroom curriculum. The class is currently studying plants and trees and as part of the unit the educators wanted to incorporate creative arts into the very scientific study. The class looked at various ways plants and flowers that have been depicted by famous artists. Paintings from Monet, van Gogh and Picasso were used as a guide for the children. They used PECS to request for the artist they wanted to interpret and the colour paints they wanted to use.



Using the Pyramid Approach to Education, the children were all reinforced before beginning the project, though many were too keen to begin, all reinforcement was ignored once the paintbrush was in hand! Whilst some wanted help to hold the paintbrushes steady, many were happy to follow the outline, whilst others wanted to have a completely independent interpretation of their chosen art work. The children all concentrated really well, with most artists choosing a wide range of colours for their project!

The project was conducted in a group setting with a primary communication partner and a physical prompter to assist those still on discrimination phases. The lesson also included critical communication skills such as yes, no and wait.

The class thoroughly enjoyed the activity with many wanting to stay on and paint after their artwork had been finished. It was then decided to work on a much larger scale by doing a class project on a much larger canvass exploring the idea of the life cycle of a flower.



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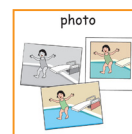
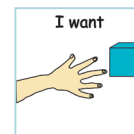
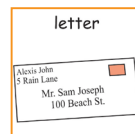
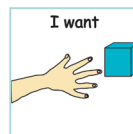
We are now on Facebook, Twitter and Linked In.
We also post news regularly to the Pyramid Australia RSS Feed.

So now you can stay updated with PECS and Pyramid news however you prefer.
Just click on the relevant icon below or in the side bar.



Do you have a question, would you like advice?

Sophie & Rebecca will be answering your questions in our newsletter.
Please send an email to 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

Show Us Your PECS! Facebook Photo Competition

Help us fill our 2012, 10th Birthday Calendar with your PECS photos!

You can enter by uploading you photos to
our Facebook page and have your friends and
family vote. To vote, simply comment "vote"
below your favourite picture/s.

For information about the fantastic prizes on
offer and how to enter the competition, visit us
at www.pecs.com.

Voting starts on Monday 1st August 2011 and
ends Friday 30th September 2011



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Featured Service

Host your own workshop - Bring a Pyramid consultant to you!

Pyramid Educational Consultants of Australia is committed to quality training to meet the specific needs of your organisation. All of our workshops are available for private presentation to your staff or team members. Scheduling is available throughout the year, and we will make every attempt to schedule a date that is convenient for all of your staff to attend.

Successful On-Site Training

Pyramid has travelled throughout the country and the world offering schools, organisations and family groups a unique blend of program design, staff development and family training that can help make educational programs more successful and responsive to student and family needs.

Staff Development

Contact Pyramid to enquire how you can bring one or more of our dynamic training workshops to your community, organisation or school.

Training workshops may be combined with consultation to assist in the preparation of behaviour management plans and other programs needed to alleviate the difficulties that special needs children or adults may encounter.

Program Design

Services can be provided on an ongoing basis throughout the year, or in a training workshop that can be followed up with additional supportive services. We are able to create a unique package that will meet the exact needs of your school, organisation or group. Training workshops include, but are not limited to PECS Basic, PECS Advanced, Teaching Critical Communication Skills, SoSAFE! and Pyramid Approach Basic.

Family Training

Many families look to us to help improve their home setting through intensive training that develops their abilities to enrich the lives of their special needs children.

We can help families make the most of their day-to-day lives through providing the means to improving in-home and community interactions. Training can include parents, siblings, grandparents and/ or family friends in a variety of settings.

To provide quality training, in a cost-effective manner, please contact Erin Hobbin on +61 3 9314 5374 or ehobbin@pecs.com. FaHCSIA funding can be used for most of Pyramid's consultation and workshop services.

PECS Training Manual (2nd 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

If you would like to purchase the manual in any of the above translations,
please contact ncullen@pecs.com

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To PECS or not to PECS?

Rebecca Wright, Speech Pathologist

The idea that PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System) or other augmentative and alternative communication strategies (AAC) such as signing might impede speech development is a common concern amongst parents, families and other professionals working with many of the clients I am referred for intervention.

The research in this area indicates that those individuals who develop the capacity for functional use of speech will use speech. For those who do not develop functional use of speech, they will have limited or no means of functional communication if we choose not to teach them AAC as part of their communication intervention. Ronski and Sevcik (2005) describe it as critical that AAC be introduced before communication failure occurs and that we often observe contextually inappropriate behaviours in individuals who have difficulty with functional communication.

I recently began working with a client whose mother was unsure about PECS as an intervention for her son. Her number one concern was that PECS would in some way stop her son from speaking. Her son had previously been introduced to PECS within his ABA program and she had observed him struggling with. He was attempting to say several words such as saying /b/ for "biscuit" and when she said "ready, set" he would say "go". He was able to count to 5 by imitation. She explained to me that she was finding it difficult to understand why the recommended intervention wouldn't specifically focus on developing speech. This scenario raises the question about the conditions under which we accept speech as functional communication. The following table illustrates this point in relation to the communicative function of requesting.

<i>Antecedent</i>	<i>Behaviour observed</i>	<i>Type of Communication</i>
You make some popcorn and wander around eating it	Individual walks up to you and says "I want popcorn" and you give some.	Spontaneous requesting
You make some popcorn and wander around eating it. The individual walks up or looks over to you. You notice this and say "What do you want?"	In response to your question the individual says "I want popcorn" and you give some.	Responsive requesting
You make some popcorn and wander around eating it. The individual walks up to you. looks at you, looks at the popcorn. You say "What do you want?" the individual says nothing but tries to help themselves. You say, "Say I want popcorn"	In response to asking the individual to say "I want popcorn" they say "I want popcorn" or some variation and you give some popcorn.	Imitative request

You will notice that although the speech output may appear identical in all 3 scenarios, it is only the first scenario in which the individual has used speech spontaneously. It illustrates to us that speech does not always equal functional communication and in turn functional communication does not always involve speech.

There can be much confusion about where speech production fits into augmentative and alternative communication (AAC), however, it does not need to be an either/or choice. PECS can be both an augmentative and/or an alternative communication system. An augmentative



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communication system is a system that assists the individual to maximise their use of natural speech but also acts in place of speech in situations where the individual cannot produce the speech required. An alternative communication system is to replace speech that hasn't developed or has been lost.

While every learner of PECS will have their own individual strengths and weaknesses in relation to the physical production of speech the following table summarises some of the common issues and where expectations for direct speech intervention commonly occur.

Description of learner's speech skills	How speech fits within intervention
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learner produces no speech Learner produces some sounds but is not clearly producing words Learner used to produce speech clearly but seems to have "lost" those skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PECS provides an alternative communication system PECS allows for the individual to develop spontaneous requesting skills and allows the communicative partner to frequently model vocabulary that is functional for that individual (single words Phases I-III and sentences Phase IV and beyond). In Phase IV of PECS the constant time delay strategy is introduced. This is a 3-5 second delay added before the communication partner "fills the gap". It is time for the learner to attempt to talk in conjunction with the picture exchange. Many individuals start to produce speech or attempt more speech when they reach this phase of the PECS protocol. Speech is not insisted on as part of the exchange (as the learning focus is communication) but differential reinforcement is used for any spontaneous attempts to speak in conjunction with exchanging i.e. we let the student know speaking plus exchanging is better than exchanging alone by giving them more of what they have asked for. PECS provides the individual meaningful contexts within which to attempt speech production. A program to stimulate the production of speech sounds may be developed and implemented separately to the individual communication program.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learner tries to speak all the time and produces some words clearly but not everything they want to say is clear to all communication partners. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PECS provides an augmentative system, a system that maximises the effectiveness of the individual's natural speech abilities while accommodating for difficulties such as not being able to say everything clearly or not being able to recall the name of all the items they want to ask for. As indicated above, speech in conjunction with the picture exchange will be differentially reinforced. Individuals would usually be provided with intervention specifically targeting improving speech production but for those with significant speech difficulties, this progress can be slower than their developing language skills. PECS provides a way to help avoid communication breakdown, allowing the individual to provide as much information to their communication partners without having to rely purely on speech that they find difficult to produce.

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learner's speech is clear, they appear to construct a variety of sentences but it is predominantly echolalia (either immediate or delayed). • Learner produces clear words or sentences but only in response to being asked a question. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PECS would be considered an augmentative communication system in this scenario, used to assist the individual to maximise the use of their natural speech abilities. • In these contexts PECS may even be a short term measure to assist teaching the individual to initiate communication and learning what to say, to whom and when.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The learner's speech output alone does not match their speech and language output when supported by AAC (e.g. the learner will spontaneously say two words "want ball" but with picture support can produce "I want the red ball". 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PECS would be considered an augmentative communication system in this scenario, used to assist the individual to maximise the information they are able to include for their communicative partner and length of utterance produced. • Many learners in this situation will actually produce more speech in conjunction with PECS than when relying on speech alone.

The long term goal for all of my clients with complex communication difficulties or disorders is that they will develop functional use of natural speech. However, the use of AAC is seen as a tool to use on the road to reaching this goal, not as a last resort. For those individuals that speech persists as a difficulty, they will have had the opportunity to learn to use PECS as a functional communication system. There is much evidence to support the use of AAC to allow an individual to continue to develop in their language and communication skills, without a focus on speech, as these can often develop faster than speech production skills in individuals who find speech very difficult.

I am pleased to be able to report that the young man I mentioned earlier in this article has been successfully using PECS for the last 6 months and has experienced even more success in the last month after an intensive week of intervention. He has reached Phase IV of the PECS protocol and now consistently requests using sentences. He is slowly beginning to learn to add attributes to his requests to provide even more information to his communication partners. And while he runs a mile every time someone tries to 'make him' attempt 'traditional' speech exercises, he attempts to say everything on his sentence strip approximately 90% of the time. This provides a functional context within which we can continue to target speech production.

Better Start for Children with Disability

As of 1 July 2011, children who are aged under 6 years and have been diagnosed with Down syndrome, cerebral palsy, Fragile X syndrome, or a moderate or greater vision or hearing impairment, including deafblindness, can be registered to access early intervention funding. Children with one of the listed disabilities will also be able to access new Medicare items under the Better Start for Children with Disability (Better Start) initiative. The Better Start initiative includes the following components:

- Funding for early intervention services and treatments for eligible children
- Additional assistance for eligible children who live in outer-regional, rural or remote locations to help with the costs of accessing services
- A Medicare item for the development of a treatment and management plan for eligible children up to the age of 13
- Medicare items for up to four allied health diagnostic services, the results of which contribute to the development of the treatment and management plan, and
- Medicare items for up to 20 relevant allied health services in total for each eligible child up to the age of 15 provided the treatment and management plan is in place before the age of 13.

For further information regarding the Better Start Initiative, please visit the FaHCSIA website by [clicking this link](#)

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Expressions of Interest for PECS Intensive Programs in 2012

We have set aside many school holiday dates in 2012 for PECS Intensive Programs. At this stage we would like to hear from you!

- In which state would you like to see a PECS Intensive Program?
- Do you know of 4 families that would be interested in having their child attend a PECS Intensive Program?

Once we have received expressions of interest from approximately 4 families in any area we will schedule a PECS Intensive Program in that area.

To register your expression of interest please contact Erin Hobbin on +61 3 9314 5374 or ehobbin@pecs.com

PECS Intensive Programs 2011/2012

Melbourne, Victoria: 2nd to 7th October, 2011

Adelaide, South Australia: 9th to 14th October, 2011

Mornington, Victoria: 8th to 13th January, 2012

Redland District Special School, Queensland: 22nd to 27th January, 2012

Location to be confirmed: 15th to 20th April, 2012

Tasmania - Location to be confirmed: 3rd to 8th June, 2012

Northern Territory - Location to be confirmed: 24th to 29th June, 2012

Victoria - Location to be confirmed: 1st to 6th July, 2012

Location to be confirmed: 8th to 13th July, 2012

Location to be confirmed: 30th September to 5th October, 2012

Please email Erin at ehobbin@pecs.com if you are interested in attending a PECS Intensive Program in 2011 or 2012

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PECS Intensive Follow-up Options

Our PECS Intensive Programs continue to offer an option for families to access a holiday program with a difference. The students attending our program come for a range of reasons. For some, the program is used to introduce PECS, some are attending to consolidate and extend their skills while others are attending with problem solving complex issues within their use of PECS as the goal. Since the last issue of our newsletter we have had another PECS Intensive Program. From the 11th -15th of July 2011, 3 students attended the program at Namarluk School in Darwin. Many thanks to Bert Beekhuizen, the school's principal, for allowing us to use a classroom, the playground and some very useful resources within the school. Across the week all of our students made significant progress within their spontaneity, persistence and discrimination within PECS. It was wonderful to be able to provide a program outside of Victoria. Future plans include PECS Intensive Programs in Adelaide (October 2011), Melbourne (October 2011) and Brisbane (January 2012). As part of our PECS Intensive Programs, all students also receive 10 hours of follow-up consultation to assist in the generalisation of skills learned in the program to home and school environments. Follow-up consultations are often provided in home, to train family members in implementing PECS and continuing to build on the skills that have been learned during the PECS Intensive Program. In addition, consultations in schools, childcare centres and kindergartens are often also provided. This allows our consultants to provide information and training to staff and peers in understanding and using PECS with our students. For those who live outside of Melbourne we often have to get a little more creative in our follow-up options. Many families choose to utilise web consultations as a way of accessing their follow-up consultations. This allows our consultants to observe parents and/or teachers implementing PECS with our students and to provide immediate feedback and guidance. Some of the families that have accessed the PECS Intensive Program who live outside of Melbourne also choose to use their follow-up hours in a mini-intensive. Our consultants then travel to the family and provide several hours of consultation over a day or the full 10 hours over 2-3 days. If more than one family who have completed the PECS Intensive Program live in the same area our consultants are able to offer time to 2 or more students over several days.

Upcoming Workshops

Sydney SoSAFE! Training: 19th October, 2011

Melbourne PECS Basic Training: 20th & 21st October, 2011

Brisbane PECS Basic Training: 24th & 25th October, 2011

Sydney PECS Basic Training: 27th & 28th October, 2011

Auckland PECS Basic Training: 2nd & 3rd November, 2011

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

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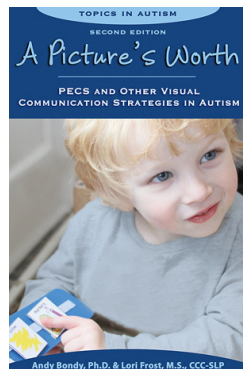
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Below prices are in Australian dollars and include GST where applicable.
Visit our New Zealand online store for specials in New Zealand dollars.



A Picture's Worth (Second Edition)

Andy Bondy, Ph.D. & Lori Frost, M.S., CCC-SLP

\$35.00

New edition due late September. Pre-order your's online today!

A Picture's Worth, the PECS primer written by the developers of the Picture Exchange Communication System, is now available in a second edition. This user-friendly guide introduces PECS, a simple and empowering communication tool in which partners exchange cards with photos or line drawings representing objects, attributes, and actions. A child or adult who has delayed or no speech can easily express his basic desires (e.g., "ice cream") or needs using a PECS card without prompting from another. And as a person's PECS usage progresses, he or she learns to put pictures together in sentences to express desires (e.g., "I want chocolate ice cream."), to comment, and to ask questions.

This new edition cites research that proves PECS (and other AAC strategies) doesn't interfere with the development of speaking skills, and actually can provide a boost to the acquisition of these skills. There's also expanded information on:

- Deciding whether a child needs AAC and could benefit from PECS
- Who is an appropriate candidate for PECS
- Error correction strategies during the initial stages of PECS
- How to choose challenging behaviours to try to eliminate
- What to do when a child does not look at pictures

Autism 24/7

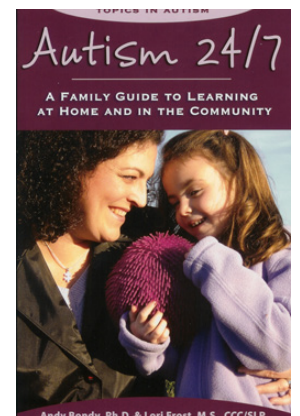
Andy Bondy, Ph.D. & Lori Frost, M.S., CCC/SLP

\$45.00

If your son or daughter is over-stimulated by noisy places or has trouble communicating or interacting with people, then everyday activities like going to the playground or helping out with household chores may seem outside your child's repertoire. Authors Bondy and Frost, the founders of the award-winning Pyramid Approach to educating children with autism, show how it is possible to keep family life running smoothly and teach a child with autism to participate in important and routine family activities at home and in the neighborhood. And their teaching strategies can be used during the course of everyday life without making too many adjustments or converting your home into a school.

In a reassuring, easy-to-read style, Autism 24/7 encourages parents to pinpoint times when their child's behaviour or lack of skills seems to interfere with family functioning. This step helps identify what to teach your child and what goals to set.

Autism 24/7 gives families confidence and concrete tools to integrate their child with autism into life at home and in their community as much as possible.



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Every Australian Counts

Product Specials



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Every Australian Counts National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)



NDIS | revolutionising disability services

On the 2nd August Pyramid Educational Consultants, and many others around the country held a DisabiliTea to raise awareness and show support of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

The Government has now announced that they share the vision for a National Disability Insurance Scheme and will begin laying the foundations for its introduction.

See the Government's announcement [here](#) and the Productivity Commission's report [here](#).
For more information please visit www.everyaustraliancounts.com.au

Product Specials for September

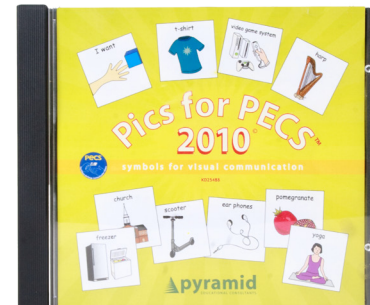
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