



Welcome to the Pyramid Picture! In this issue, you will find articles on the following topics:

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Teaching Break:

All of our learners are capable of taking breaks! Your students may run out of the room or push away unwanted materials. These actions generally serve the same function as a break. Our goal is to teach our learners a more appropriate way to request a break, before engaging in these Contextually Inappropriate Behaviors (CIBs).

I once worked with a student named Josh. He had difficulty participating in morning circle, likely due to the increased noise level. It was generally the case, that at some point during the circle activities, Josh would begin to bring his hands up to his ears. From there, he would jump up and sprint out of the room. Clearly, running from the room was serving an escape/avoidance function. Our team decided that teaching Josh to request a break would serve the same function as the darting behavior.

We identified that the precursor behavior to running out of the room, was Josh bringing his hands to his ears. Having discussed our teaching strategy with the team beforehand, we had the break card available. We also arranged the staffing environment to use the 2-person prompting procedure necessary to teach this skill. As Josh demonstrated the precursor behavior of bringing his hands to his ears, the physical prompter from behind Josh prompted him to exchange the break card with the communication partner. The break request was honored and Josh was lead to a neutral break area of the room. This area consisted of a bean bag chair and timer. The timer was set for two minutes. At the end of this time, Josh was directed back to his work area. This is key! The students must return to the original activity. Remember to remind your students that they are working towards earning their selected reinforcers.

It's often the case, that once break is introduced, our students become "break abusers". As such, they request breaks exhaustively throughout the day. At that point, you should consider systematically limiting the number of breaks that are

available within a given time period. Take some data to determine the current number of requested breaks. For Josh, it was 10 breaks within a 30-minute period. Though he was initially on break for the majority of morning circle, he had previously been "on break" for the same amount of time by running out of the room. To begin decreasing the number of available breaks, we constructed a topic board with 10 break cards. Josh was able to use all 10 breaks. Over time, we began to decrease this number, from nine breaks to eight breaks, etc. Eventually, we got to the point where Josh was only requesting 1-2 breaks during morning circle.



[To order the break cards, complete with a miniature lesson plan, please click here.](#)

Each issue of the Pyramid Picture, will contain clinical information regarding teaching the Nine Critical Communication Skills. We do offer a full day training on teaching these important skills, entitled Teaching Communication Skills for Independence. Please contact Stefanie Levendis via phone (888-732-7462) or email (slevendis@pecs.com) to schedule this training for your organization.

The River Street Autism Program at Coltsville:

Over the past four years, Pyramid Educational Consultants, Inc. has provided extensive consultation and training on PECS and the Pyramid Approach to Education to the River Street Autism Program at Coltsville in Hartford, CT. All staff members attend the PECS Basic Training presented on-site. The majority has also attended the PECS Advanced Training, as well as periodic Pyramid presentations on Verbal Behavior, Critical Communication Skills and Classroom Organization. A Pyramid Consultant then visits the program 2-4 days each month. Currently, Lauren Troy, MS, BCBA consults to this program. She provides specific recommendations to further the skills of both the staff and students.

Additionally, the program provides each student with 30-40 hours per week of ABA (Applied Behavior Analysis) programming. There is a wealth of qualified and caring staff members. The clinical supervisor, Dr. Kathleen Dyer, is a Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) and a certified speech pathologist. She holds her doctorate in Speech and Hearing Science. The staff supervisors are Board Certified Behavior Analysts. The program also employs certified speech, OT and PT providers.

Recently, Lori Frost (co-creator of PECS) visited the program. She observed the

classrooms and provided staff training related to generalization of communication skills. Staff brainstormed specific opportunities to include PECS within the student's daily programming. Lauren Troy indicates that the staff members are working diligently to include communicative opportunities throughout the day. Many students are working on the use of attributes to make spontaneous requests. For instance, in the sensory room, one student was recently observed making requests for "I want push scooter", "I want jump trampoline" etc. Another great attribute lesson took place in the form of ordering from the "Peeps Store". Students requested various colors and shapes of the Peep marshmallow candies. It was a fun lesson for the staff and students!

It's wonderful to hear the continual updates regarding the student progress at the Coltsville School. If you are interested in additional clinical information regarding similar consultative and training models, please contact Catherine Horton via phone (302-355-5979) or email (chorton@pecs.com).

Save the Date - PECS Workshop in Denver, CO with Lori Frost!

Lori Frost, co-creator of PECS, will be presenting the PECS Basic Training in her home state of Colorado!! Lori is an exceptional speaker. This is your chance to hear about PECS from the woman that created this extraordinary functional communication system.

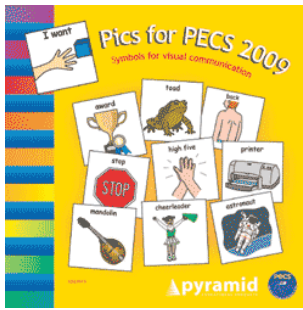


**PECS Basic Training
September 24 & 25, 2009
Denver, Colorado
Cost: \$395 professionals/\$295 parents**

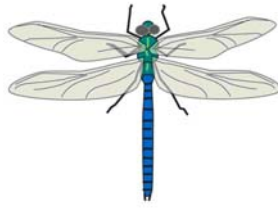
We are currently accepting registrations via phone (888-732-7462) or online (www.pecs-usa.com).

Featured Products:

Pics for PECS 2009



dragonfly



worried



Did you know that we've upgraded all of our images to high-resolution jpg files? You can now enlarge the pictures with no image degradation! This year's CD includes over 300 new images for a grand total of over 2000 symbols.

We've expanded the range of pictures so students from all over the world can communicate more effectively. New images include kimono, mandolin, dragonfly, worried, tabouli and quesadilla. We include a comprehensive picture dictionary of every symbol on the CD and grids for using pictures in Microsoft Word(r) format. Call to ask about Pics for PECS(c) in Spanish, Japanese, Greek and French. [Click here to download the picture list!](#)

[Click here to order the 2009 Pics for PECS CD.](#)

PECS Song Activity Kit



Make your music activities more functional and interactive by incorporating PECS opportunities! To expand beyond simple requesting, we use a "Let's Sing" Sentence Starter so that students can construct sentences such as "Let's Sing Itsy Bitsy Spider." The kit includes all the materials you'll need to sing five favorite songs. For Itsy Bitsy Spider we include a friendly, adorable hand puppet spider your learner will love to interact with. For Five Little Ducks five bright yellow plastic ducks are ready for requesting or commenting using number concepts. For Green and Speckled Frogs five green squeaking frogs each have a different color of speckles for color requests and comments. The kit includes 6 lovable, huggable beanie farm animals to request for Old MacDonald. When singing Teasing Mr. Alligator your learners can request or comment on five delightful, poseable monkeys in five different colors.

[Click here to order the PECS Song Activity Kit.](#)

Spotlight on PECS Basic Training - Burlington, Vermont with Pyramid Consultant, Catherine Horton:

As consultants for Pyramid Educational Consultants, Inc., we are fortunate to travel across the United States. We have presented in all 50 states. Internationally, we have presented in more than 30 countries around the globe. Recently, my travels brought me to the beautiful state of Vermont. Though the snow was beginning to melt, there were reports of fantastic skiing conditions at many of the local mountains. Vermont is also home to Ben & Jerry's Ice Cream, Cabot Cheese and Lake Champlain chocolates. I was able to indulge in all of the amazing local flavors!!

A small group attended the PECS Basic Training on March 16-17, 2009. It was a wonderful group, with participant backgrounds including a psychologist, speech-language pathologists, autism program specialists and special education teachers. There were many thoughtful questions throughout the two days of training. Feedback and evaluations from the workshop were extremely positive. One evaluation indicated: "This workshop was very effective at teaching how to begin implementing a PECS program. I am excited to bring the information back to my school district." Another indicated, "Fantastic presentation of all phases. Loved the video examples. Loved the hands on practice - Catherine make it look easy! Practice is humbling!" One speech-language-pathologist wrote, "Catherine has a very nice speaker presence in addition to being very well versed on the subject. Really well done - very professional."

It was a fantastic group in a beautiful town. I look forward to returning next year. [To view a list of trainings scheduled throughout the United States, please click here.](#)

Spotlight on Pyramid US Clinical Director, Jo-Anne Matteo:



In January 2009, Jo-Anne Matteo, M.S., CCC-SLP was appointed as the Clinical Director of the Pyramid US Company. Jo-Anne has a wealth of background knowledge that she brings to this position. Prior to her employment with Pyramid eight years ago, Jo-Anne worked as speech-language pathologist and special education administrator. She is the founder of a public school program in Connecticut for preschool and elementary children who present with

significant special needs in the areas of communication, cognitive, social, behavioral and motor disabilities. It was during her time at this program, that Jo-Anne first began implementing PECS and the Pyramid Approach to Education. Because she is such a strong advocate for her students, Jo-Anne arranged for all staff to participate in the Pyramid Approach to Education 5-Day Training. Her staff also received ongoing classroom consultation.

Through her position with Pyramid, Jo-Anne has made a significant positive impact on the lives of thousands of people with developmental disabilities. She has participated in our PECS Intensive Summer Program, both within the US and Greece. She has presented and consulted extensively throughout the United States, as well as other countries around the globe. Everyone that has ever met Jo-Anne can attest to her goodwill, amazing out-going personality and strong moral character.

Currently, Jo-Anne resides in Florida. She continues to provide direct consultation to many local families, focusing on functional activities within the home setting. She also continues to present a variety of Pyramid Trainings. Additionally, in her current position as the Clinical Director, she oversees all clinical components of

the US Company. Her hard-work and dedication are apparent in all facets of her job. Congratulations, Jo-Anne!

Newsletter content written by Catherine Horton, MS, CCC-SLP. Please direct any inquiries to chorton@pecs.com or 302-355-5979.

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