

# **The Pyramid Approach for Parents and Professionals**

Lori Frost, MS, CCC-SLP  
Andy Bondy, PhD



**The Pyramid Approach  
for Parents and Professionals**

**Andy Bondy, PhD**  
Pyramid Educational Consultants

---

---

---

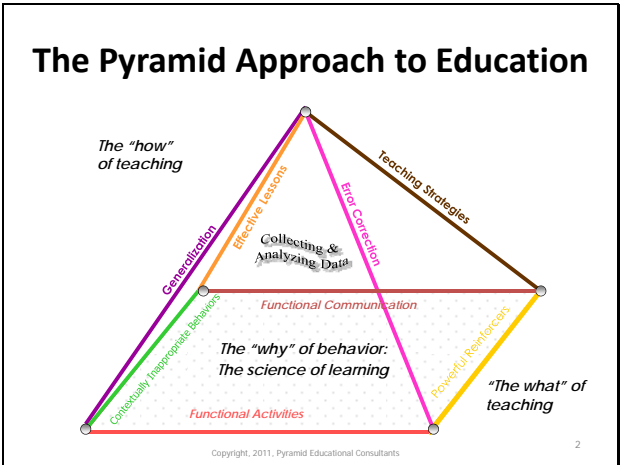
---

---

---

---

---



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Summary of Presentation**

**Purpose: Design effective  
educational environments**

- **The Base**
  - Why learn?
  - What to teach
- **The Body**
  - How to teach
- **Central is Collecting and Analyzing Data**

Copyright, 2011, Pyramid Educational Consultants

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Functional Activities

### Functional Orientation

- **Why do we have schools?**
  - To teach skills to get a job and move away from home
- **Where do we teach?**
  - School Based
  - Home Related
  - Community (including services and vocational)
- **If the child doesn't finish the task independently, who will?**

### Functional materials

Copyright, 2011, Pyramid Educational Consultants

4

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Reinforcement Systems

### Powerful Reinforcers

- Student defined
- 1/2 second rule
- Grandma's secret (non-contingent R+)
- Differential Reinforcement
- "Let's make a deal" using visual support!
- Setting the minimum rate of R+ via ARRT (Audio Reinforcer Reminder Tone)

Copyright, 2011, Pyramid Educational Consultants

5

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Functional Communication

- Not all behaviors are communicative
- Must occur between two people
- Communicator directs behavior to communicative partner
- Communicative partner **mediates** access to reinforcer



Copyright, 2011, Pyramid Educational Consultants

6

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Functional Communication**

**Where do we start?**

What communication skill?

- Request - direct/tangible consequences
- Comment - social consequences

Spontaneity?

- Initiate
- Respond
- Imitate

Is modality important to defining communication?– **NO!**

- Speech, PECS, sign, SDGs, etc.

Copyright, 2011, Pyramid Educational Consultants 7

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Picture Exchange  
Communication System™ (PECS)**

- No prerequisite training
- First step: teach spontaneous request  
*Impact: Learner approaches communicative partner to initiate social interaction*
- Gradual change to sentence structure
- Functions added (comments, attributes, etc.)
- No evidence of speech inhibition
- Greatly reduces “prompt dependency”
- Evidence-based practice

Copyright, 2011, Pyramid Educational Consultants 8

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Nine Critical Communication Skills**

<u>Expressive</u>	<u>Receptive</u>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Request reinforcers</li><li>2. Request assistance</li><li>3. Request a break</li><li>4. Accept</li><li>5. Reject</li></ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Respond to “wait” or “no”</li><li>2. Respond to directions</li><li>3. Follow a schedule</li><li>4. Transition</li></ol>

Copyright, 2011, Pyramid Educational Consultants 9

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Contextually Inappropriate Behaviors and Alternatives**

**Behavioral Function vs. Form**

- Major Functions
  - Gain some type of R+
    - Concrete, activity, social, internal
  - Avoidance/Escape
    - Demand, activities, settings, pain
  - Elicited (minimally controlled by consequences)
    - Loss/delay of R+, schedule induced, pain
- FEAB (Functionally Equivalent Alternative Behavior)
- Direct Reactions to CIB

Copyright, 2011, Pyramid Educational Consultants

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Generalization Strategies**

**Plan from the start, not from 'mastery'**

- Stimulus Factors
  - People, places, time, materials
  - Contextual issues: supervisory distance, # of learners in group
- Response Factors
  - Rate, total #, duration, intensity
  - Complexity, accuracy, fluency

**GRADUALISM!**

Copyright, 2011, Pyramid Educational Consultants

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Effective Lessons**

**Lesson Format**

- Discrete Trial format (DT)
  - Short, simple, distinct
  - Repeatable - but how many in a row?
- Sequential tasks
  - Chains: Forward vs. Backward
- Who Initiates
  - Teacher initiation
  - Learner-initiated interest
    - Often with teacher expansions

Copyright, 2011, Pyramid Educational Consultants

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Prompting as a Teaching Tool**

- Prompts are a teacher's way to *help* a learner behave in a new way
  - Many types

**#1 Rule of Prompting**

- ◆ *If you put it in, you take it out!*
- Teaching without prompting?
  - Shaping

Copyright, 2011, Pyramid Educational Consultants 13

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Minimizing and Correcting Errors**

**Error Correction Strategies**

- **Correct it, don't just FIX it!!**
- **4 Step Error Corrections**
  - Within discrete lesson - re-establish stimulus control
- **Backstep**
  - Find error in sequence - re-establish routine with prompt to prevent error
- **Anticipatory Prompt**
  - Known error pattern - change prompt on next trial

Copyright, 2011, Pyramid Educational Consultants 14

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Collecting and Analyzing Data**

- **We take data to answer:**
  - *"Is this a good lesson plan?"*
    - Take as little as needed to reliably answer question
- **Take lots of data early and thin slowly**
- **Types of data**
  - Behavior: Frequency, intensity, duration
  - Product: Outcome of actions
  - Support level: Prompt type, supervision
- **Summarize data for trends**
- **When problems appear, go through the Pyramid!**

Copyright, 2011, Pyramid Educational Consultants 15

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Why use the Pyramid Approach to Education™?

- Fits broad educational goals
- It works for
  - Learners - all ages, all disabilities
  - Staff - less turn-over
  - Parents
  - Administrators - cost effective!

Copyright, 2011, Pyramid Educational Consultants 16

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### How can the Pyramid Approach be implemented?

- Training and workshops
- Consultation
- Feedback from administrators, colleagues and parents

Copyright, 2011, Pyramid Educational Consultants 17

---

---

---

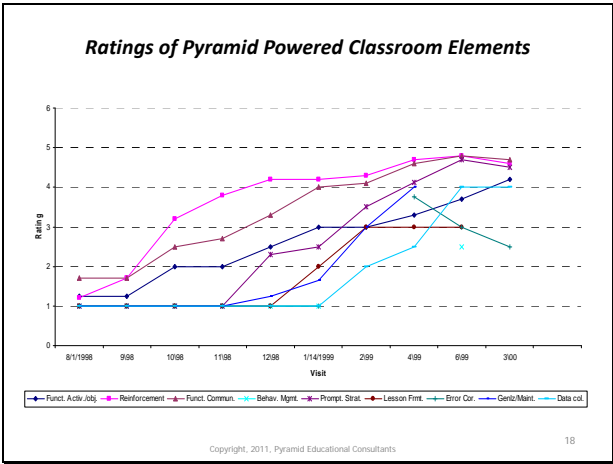
---

---

---

---

---




---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Pyramid Workshops

- Pyramid Approach Basic Training
  - 2-day Basic (or tailored to a specific program)
- Pyramid Topics including
  - Critical communication skills, behavior intervention, Asperger syndrome, language of emotions, parent training, analyzing language (using Skinner's *Verbal Behavior*), organizing and managing classrooms, and more
- PECS Basic Training (2-day)
- PECS Advanced Training
- PECS Implementer Certification™

Copyright, 2011, Pyramid Educational Consultants

19



Please visit <http://www.pecs.com/Research.htm>  
for PECS related research publications

Copyright, 2011, Pyramid Educational Consultants

20

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---