The Pyramid Approach for Parents and Professionals

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The Pyramid Approach to Education

The “why” of behavior: The science of learning

The “how” of teaching

“the what” of teaching

Functional Communications

Data Collection & Analyzing Data

Teaching in Context

The “what” of teaching

The “how” of teaching

The “why” of behavior: The science of learning

Functional Activities

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
### 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?**

### 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)

### Functional Communication

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

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**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

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**Nine Critical Communication Skills**

**Expressive**
1. Request reinforcers
2. Request assistance
3. Request a break
4. Accept
5. Reject

**Receptive**
1. Respond to “wait” or “no”
2. Respond to directions
3. Follow a schedule
4. Transition
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

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!**

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
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

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

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!
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!

How can the Pyramid Approach be implemented?

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

Ratings of Pyramid Powered Classroom Elements

Visit Rating
Funct. Activ./obj.
Reinforcement
Funct. Commun.
Behav. Mgmt.
Prompt. Strat.
Lesson Frm t.
Error Cor.
Genlz/Maint.
Data col.
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™

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