



Special Education

Needs Toolkit

An informative resource for educators to give you an introduction to Special Educational Needs and useful resources to use in the classroom.



Getting started

Click on an item to find out more information on the topic 

[Tips from successful SEN educators](#)



[What is Hydrotherapy](#)



[PECS Cards](#)



[SEN Glossary](#)



[Helpful questions to ask](#)



[School-wide positive behaviour support framework](#)



[Schools we work with](#)



[Behaviour management](#)





Top Tips

With the help of some of our amazing educators currently working in Special Education Settings, we have compiled a list of wise words to help you work in Special Needs schools.

Ask for student information

- There's almost always a folder with key information including triggers for behaviour, and what support the students require.

Don't take it personally

- Sometimes a student is going to have some very challenging behaviours, and it might seem that you've made things worse – change your approach where needed, but don't expect to have all the answers.

Be approachable!

- Talk to the students about what interests them. Building a rapport, even if you're only there for one shift, will make a difference – and sometimes they even remember you two years later (has happened to me!)

ASSUME COMPETENCE

- Never assume a student can't do something. They might just do it in their own way.

Use a variety of approaches

- Be prepared to approach the same task from all different angles – it might be effective to use repetition, simplification, modelling, visual cues, examples, or take a break and then come back to it.

Always use inclusive language

- [Inclusive language](#) – focus on the person, not the impairment.

Build rapport

- Pay attention to what each student likes – observing little things like characters on their pencil case can help you to build rapport.

Bring a hair tie

- Trust us, you'll need it!

Personal care

- When working with students that have physical disabilities, there may be aspects of personal care involved. This can include assisting with Toileting, Feeding, Medical needs etc.
- We understand that some educators may not be comfortable with some aspects of personal care so please ensure your consultant is aware of what you are and are not comfortable assisting with.
- The best way to learn is through experience and our schools will support you with that! It is all about having the right attitude and being willing to learn. But please remember your preferences can always change so keep us updated.



Hydrotherapy

Hydrotherapy usually takes place in a small-size pool with warm water between 32–34°C, with the goal of strengthening, maintaining and improving the health of both body and mind.

Water-based therapy is beneficial to children with behavioural challenges, ADHD, migraines, emotional issues, low self-confidence and PDD, as well as many other difficulties.

- The warmth of the water has an effect on the individual neuro-muscular junctions which results in decreased muscle tone and decreased spasticity.
- The buoyancy of the water is used to assist the movement of joints – which is either more difficult or painful on dry land.
- Movement in the water and water pressure helps to reduce residual lung capacity for children and young people with chest problems. This enables more efficient lung function and reduces the risk of chest infections developing.
- Creating turbulence around an extremity (i.e. arm or leg) can increase their awareness of the limb and help with mobility – both in the water and later on dry land.
- A multi-sensory environment helps stimulate the senses whilst calming children with sensory and learning difficulties.



PECS Cards

The Picture Exchange Communication System, or PECS, allows people with little or no communication abilities to communicate using pictures. People using PECS are taught to approach another person and give them a picture of a desired item in exchange for the item. By doing so, the person is able to initiate communication. A child with autism can use PECS to communicate a request, a thought, or anything that can be reasonably be displayed or symbolised on a picture card.

The six phases of the Picture Exchange System are:

PECS Phase 1. How to communicate

The child with autism learns to exchange single pictures for items or activities they really want.

PECS Phase 2. Distance and Persistence

Still using single pictures, the child with autism learn to generalise this new skill by using it in different places, with different people and across distances. They are also taught to be more persistent communicators.

PECS Phase 3. Picture Discrimination

The child with autism learns to select from two or more pictures to ask for their favourite things. These are placed in a communication book, a ring binder with Velcro strips where pictures are stored and easily removed for communication.

PECS Phase 4. Sentence Structure

The child with autism learns to construct simple sentences on a detachable sentence strip using an "I want" picture followed by a picture of the item being requested.

PECS Phase 5. Answering Questions

The child with autism learns to use PECS to answer the question, "What do you want?"

PECS Phase 6. Commenting

Now the child with autism is taught to comment in response to questions such as, 'What do you see?', 'What do you hear?' and 'What is it?'. They learn to make up sentences starting with I see, I hear, I feel, It is a, etc.



PECS Cards

Advantages of picture communication

- The listener does not need special training because pictures are easy to understand and are often labelled.
- Simple matching makes initial communication easier.
- This is a research-based intervention that is based on Skinner's analysis of verbal behaviour.
- Starting with PECS can help avoid creating a negative emotional history related to speech.
- Many individuals start with the ability to point to what they want so there is a high possibility for success.
- PECS is a fairly inexpensive, low tech language intervention.

Nervous



Thirsty



Cold



Hot



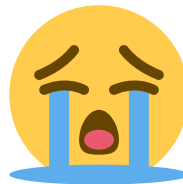
Happy



Sick



Sad



Angry



Scared



Tired



Surprised



Hungry





PECS Cards

How big is my emotion?

5	
4	
3	
2	
1	

Offer your printable PECS cards





PECS Cards

Wants and needs

Communicating in an SEN environment can be challenging. The Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) allows children that struggle with communication to speak using pictures and communication cards. A child can use these cards to indicate their basic needs and wants. This reduces the child's frustration and social isolation.

I want...

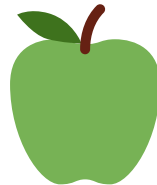
Drink



Biscuit



Apple



Banana



Book



Sand



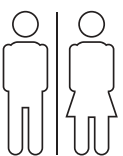
Bricks



Puzzle



Bathroom



Quiet Time



Help



You





PECS Cards

Sentence building

Having a structure for a child to build their own sentence through communication cards will boost confidence and independence. This is important for the child to build growth and be able to communicate their wants and needs effectively.

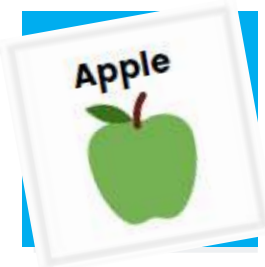
There are many sentences you can create on a Velcro board or day timeline such as the below:

- I want a _____ please.
- I want to play with the _____.
- I would like some _____ please.
- I would like you to _____ me.
- I would like a _____ and a _____ please.

I want the...



before I have a



SEN Glossary

ADHD

Attention Deficit
Hyperactivity Disorder

ASD

Autistic Spectrum
Disorder

EHCP

Education Health
Care Plan

GLD

Global Learning
Delay

HI

Hearing Impaired

HLTA

Higher Level
Teaching Assistant

IEP

Individual
Education Plan

LDD

Learning Difficulties
and Disabilities

MLD

Moderate Learning
Disability

OT

Occupational
Therapist

PMLD

Profound and Multiple
Learning Difficulties

SALT

Speech And
Language Therapy

SENCo

Special Education
Needs Coordinator

SLD

Severe Learning
Disability

TA

Teaching Assistant

VI

Visually Impaired

[Full list here](#)





Questions

Before you start your day it is important to find out as much information about the SEN setting you will be working in. This will allow you to prepare for the day and allow you to better understand the children's needs.

Teaching Assistants

- Ask about each individual child before the day starts and ask about any behaviours you should be aware of and triggers for challenging behaviour etc. It helps to get an idea of what to expect from the day. Also, ask for a briefing on the routines of the day.
- What are the top 3 things that are important in this class?

Teachers

- Where can I find the CRT folder/information about each student?
 - What makes them happy/sad/anxious/upset? What does it look like? What calming/reassuring techniques do they respond to?
 - What sensory input does this student seek or avoid? How is this best managed?
 - What increases their engagement? What affects their engagement? (e.g. noise, hunger, tiredness)
- Are there any key classroom management expectations at this school/in this room I should be aware of (eg no raising of voices, hands up for silence, staying in, time out etc)?
- Are there behaviour management policies/positive behaviour plans I should be aware of?
- Whom should I contact if I need help and how?
- What are the top 3 things that are important in this class?

At the end of the it is also a great idea to ask staff for feedback on the day.

Positive Behaviour Support Framework

School-wide positive behaviour support [\(SWPBS\)](#) is a framework that brings together school communities to develop positive, safe, supportive learning cultures. It assists schools to improve social, emotional, behavioural and academic outcomes for children and young people.

Five steps to implementing PBS:

- 1 **Expectations** – setting clear expectations eliminates doubt and sets targets.
- 2 **Modelling** – educators should model positive behaviours, illustrating what the behaviour looks and feels like (PBS is not just for students).
- 3 **Consistency** – maintain consistency so that students know what to expect with follow through.
- 4 **Acknowledgement** – positively acknowledge attempts that students make toward their target behaviours.
- 5 **Evaluation** – Evaluate the merit of each strategy regularly to ensure that it is working the way it should be.

More information can be found here:

<https://www.monash.edu/education/teachspace/articles/five-ways-to-use-positive-behaviour-support-strategies-in-your-classroom>

SEN Schools

We wanted to highlight some of our SEN schools so you can get a better idea of what each school looks and feels like before you start your day possibly working there!

Click on a school to learn more...

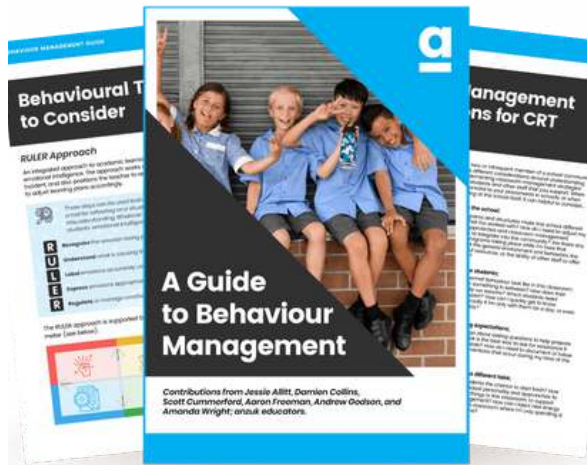




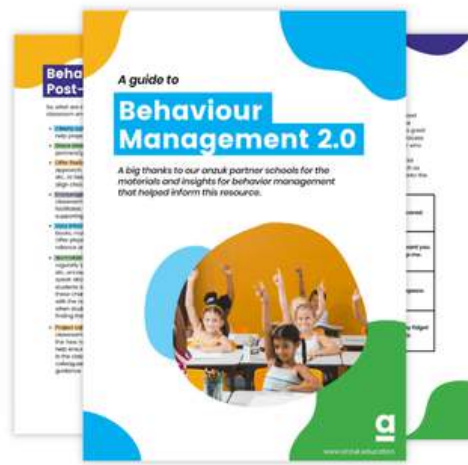
Behaviour Management

A positive relationship between students and teachers helps to give young people the best opportunity for success in the classroom. These resource guides cover ways that we can effectively manage student behaviours whilst building long-lasting trust and rapport.

Click on a resource learn more...

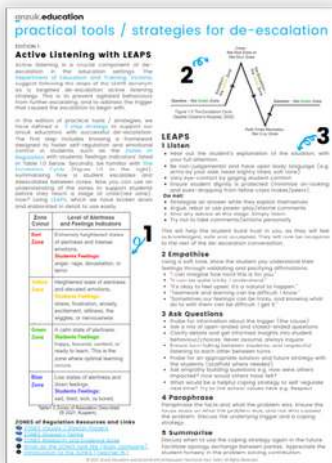


EDITION 1



EDITION 2

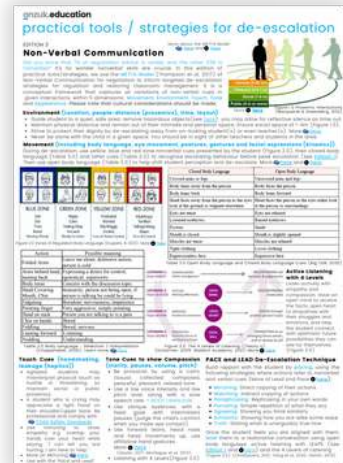
Practical tools/strategies for de-escalation



ACTIVE LISTENING WITH LEAPS



PROBLEM SOLVING CONVERSATION



NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION