

Picture Exchange Communication System

The Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) was developed in 1987 by Lori Frost, MS, CCC/SLP and Dr. Andrew Bondy. PECS is primarily used with individuals who are nonverbal or use speech with limited effectiveness to assist them in acquiring functional communication skills. PECS has received international recognition. It does not require complex or expensive materials and can be easily implemented by educators and family members.

The system emphasizes the importance of an individual with a communication deficit learning to approach a communicative partner. A variety of prompting, shaping, and fading techniques are incorporated to gradually improve and modify an individual's use of the system. PECS begins with teaching the person to exchange a picture of a desired item or activity with another person, a communication partner, who immediately honors the request. Verbal prompts are not used, thus building immediate initiation and avoiding prompt dependency. Once this step is mastered, the individual advances to the next phase of the system, which teaches discrimination of symbols, and then puts them together in simple sentences such as "I want _____." The final of the six phases teaches the individual to respond to a question.

The system can be successfully implemented with people as young as 2 years of age. Some parents worry that the introduction of a communication system other than speech will interfere with the individual's development of speech. However, research demonstrates that the opposite is true. The implementation of the PECS enhances the person's language development. In summary, there are many advantages to PECS including:

- 1) the communication exchange is clearly understood,
- 2) the individual initiates the interaction, therefore eliminating prompt dependency and
- 3) the communication is meaningful and highly motivating.

References:

Frost, L. and Bondy, A. (1994). The Picture Exchange Communication System Training Manual. Cherry Hill, NJ: PECS, Inc.

Bondy, A. and Frost, L. (1994). The Picture Exchange Communication System. Focus on Autistic Behavior 9,1-19.

Bondy, A. and Frost, L. (1998, September – October). The Picture Exchange Communication System. Advocate, 31 (5), 7-9.



Center for Disabilities (605) 357-1439
1400 West 22nd Street 1-800-658-3080 (Voice/TTY)
Sioux Falls, South Dakota
57105 www.usd.edu/cd

This document is available in alternative format upon request.