Module: Picture Exchange Communication System

Evidence Base for Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS)

The National Professional Development Center on ASD has adopted the following definition of evidence-based practices.

To be considered an evidence-based practice for individuals with ASD, efficacy must be established through peer-reviewed research in scientific journals using:

- *randomized or quasi-experimental design studies.* Two high quality experimental or quasi-experimental group design studies,
- *single-subject design studies.* Three different investigators or research groups must have conducted five high quality single subject design studies, or
- *combination of evidence.* One high quality randomized or quasi-experimental group design study and three high quality single subject design studies conducted by at least three different investigators or research groups (across the group and single subject design studies).

High quality randomized or quasi experimental design studies do not have critical design flaws that create confounds to the studies, and design features allow readers/consumers to rule out competing hypotheses for study findings. High quality in single subject design studies is reflected by a) the absence of critical design flaws that create confounds and b) the demonstration of experimental control at least three times in each study.

This definition and criteria are based on the following sources:

Horner, R., Carr, E., Halle, J., McGee, G., Odom, S., & Wolery, M. (2005). The use of single subject research to identify evidence-based practice in special education. *Exceptional Children, 71,* 165-180.

Nathan, P., & Gorman, J. M. (2002). *A guide to treatments that work.* NY: Oxford University Press.

Odom, S. L., Brantlinger, E., Gersten, R., Horner, R. D., Thompson, B., & Harris, K. (2004). *Quality indicators for research in special education and guidelines for evidence-based practices: Executive summary.* Arlington, VA: Council for Exceptional Children Division for Research.

Rogers, S. J., & Vismara, L. A. (2008). Evidence based comprehensive treatments for early autism. *Journal of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology, 37*(1), 8-38.

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Using these criteria, the empirical studies referenced below provided documentation for supporting the Picture Exchange Communication System as an evidence-based practice. This list is not exhaustive; other quality studies may exist that were not included.

Preschool

Charlop-Christy, M. H., Carpenter, M., Le, L., LeBlanc, L. A., & Kellet, K. (2002). Using the picture exchange communication system (PECS) with children with autism: assessment of PECS acquisition, speech, social-communicative behavior, and problem behavior. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis, 35*(3), 213-231.

Ganz, J. B., & Simpson, R. L. (2004). Effects on communicative requesting and speech development of the picture exchange communication system in children with characteristics of autism. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders, 34*(4), 395-409.

Yoder, P., & Stone, W. L. (2006). Randomized comparison of two communication interventions for preschoolers with autism spectrum disorders. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 74*(3), 426-435.

Elementary

Charlop-Christy, M. H., Carpenter, M., Le, L., LeBlanc, L. A., & Kellet, K. (2002). Using the picture exchange communication system (PECS) with children with autism: Assessment of PECS acquisition, speech, social-communicative behavior, and problem behavior. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis, 35*(3), 213-231.

Ganz, J. B., & Simpson, R. L. (2004). Effects on communicative requesting and speech development of the picture exchange communication system in children with characteristics of autism. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders, 34*(4), 395-409.

Howlin, P., Gordon, R. K., Pasco, G., Wade, A., & Charman, T. (2007). The effectiveness of Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) training for teachers of children with autism: A pragmatic, group randomized controlled trial. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 48*(5), 473-481.

Kravitz, R. R., Kamps, D. M., & Kemmerer, K. (2002). Brief report: Increasing communication skills for an elementary-aged learner with autism using the picture exchange communication system. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders, 32*(3), 225-230.