Module: Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS)

Overview of Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS)


The Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) was developed at the Delaware Autistic Program (DAP) and was designed to teach young children to communicate in a social context (Bondy & Frost, 1994; Frost & Bondy, 2002). Using PECS, learners are taught to give a picture of a desired item to a communicative partner in exchange for the item. There are six phases of PECS instruction, with each phase building on the last. The phases are: (1) Teaching the physically assisted exchange, (2) Expanding spontaneity, (3) Simultaneous discrimination of pictures, (4) Building sentence structure, (5) Responding to, “What do you want?” and (6) Commenting in response to a question.

Evidence

Five studies were found to meet the evidence-based practice criteria and serve as the evidence base for PECS. Two of the studies were randomized, controlled group designs, and three were single subject studies demonstrating control through a variety of research designs including multiple baseline, alternating treatments, changing criterion, and withdrawal.

With what ages is PECS effective?

In the five studies documenting the evidence base for PECS, the youngest child was three years of age, and the oldest was twelve years old. Specific numbers of participants and age data can be found in the evidence base below.

What skills or intervention goals can be addressed by PECS?

In the evidence-base, communication, social, and behavior skills were the primary targets for intervention.

In what settings can PECS be effectively used?

The research evidence suggests that PECS can be used in multiple settings, including schools, homes, and therapy settings.

Evidence Base

The studies cited in this section provide the basis upon which this practice was determined to meet the NPDC on ASD’s criteria as an evidence-based practice. This list is not exhaustive and other quality studies may exist but were not found in our search.
Module: Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS)

Preschool


Elementary


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Selected Additional References


