



Picture Exchange Communication

A Practical Guide for Parents and Educators

Picture Exchange Communication (PECS™) is a system that allows children with special needs to use pictures to facilitate communication. It was developed in 1985 by Andrew S.

Bondy, Ph.D. and Lori Frost, M.S., CCC/SLP. First used at the Delaware Autistic Program, it began as a unique augmentative/alternative communication system for individuals with autism spectrum disorder and related developmental disabilities. 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.

PECS™ consists of a series of phases designed to improve and modify an individual's use of the system and communication in general. The early phases emphasize the importance of communicating and the purpose of a communication partner. Once each step is mastered, the individual advances to the next phase of the system. For example, a student first learns to initiate communication to ask for things, and later constructs complete sentences. The final of the six phases teaches the individual to respond to a question.

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:

Christian, J. (2006). Autism Spectrum Disorders Handbook. from <http://www.usd.edu/medical-school/center-for-disabilities/upload/handbook.pdf>

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

www.PECS.com: Pyramid Education Consultants, inventors of the Picture Exchange Communication System

When implementing PECS™:

- Require your child to communicate (ask). Even if you know what they want, **make them ask for it**.
- Keep the PECS book in an easily accessible location.
- Never take symbols out of the book, it would be like taking words away from a child who uses speech.
- Every time the sentence strip is used, it should be returned to the book.

