

A Clear Picture: The Use and Benefits of PECS

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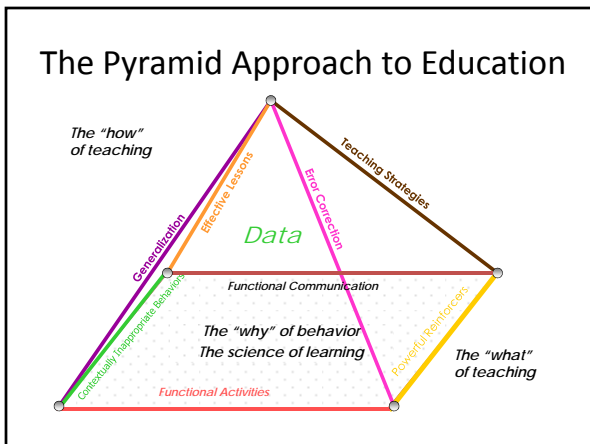


PECS

- PECS is an approach that teaches early communication skills using pictures
- Students are taught to exchange pictures for something they want
- Critical in early teaching is NOT to pre-empt, but wait for students to hand over the picture first, so they **initiate** the communication

How widespread is PECS?

- Over 86 published articles (including 28 2008-2010)
 - Number 1 downloaded online JABA article in 2009: Charlop-Christy et al. 2002 PECS study
- 63 data based or case studies
- 6 Literature reviews
- Articles generated in 15 countries outside of the USA, including:
 - *England, Wales, New Zealand, Brazil, Greece, Japan, Australia, France, Peru, Ghana, South Africa, Italy*



The Base Elements


- **Functional Activities**
Skills and activities that lead to independence
- **Powerful Reinforcers**
Powerful motivation that drives learning
- **Functional Communication**
Skills that are useful now and in the future
- **Contextually Inappropriate Behaviors**
Focus on functionally equivalent alternative behaviors

The Top Elements

- **Generalization**
Skills generalized right from the start
- **Effective Lessons**
Sequential, Discrete, Incidental
- **Specific Teaching Strategies**
Goal is to eliminate prompts
- **Minimizing and Correcting Errors**
Opportunities to teach- not just fixing mistakes
- **Data Collection**

What is communication?

- Not all behaviors are communicative
- Must occur between two people
- “Speaker” directs behavior to listener”
- “Listener” *mediates* access to reinforcer

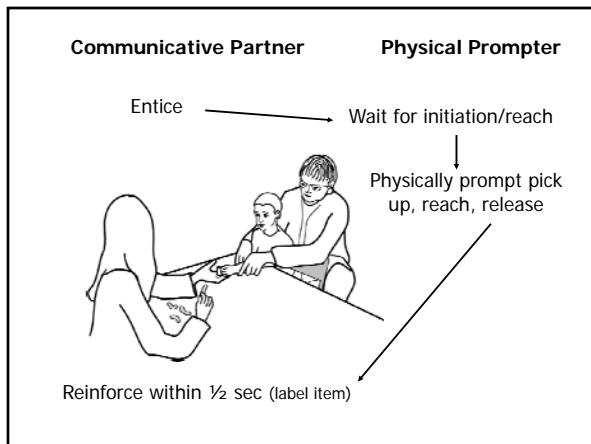


Advantages of PECS

- Requires interaction with other people
- Individual initiates communication rather than responding to a prompt
- Starts with requesting, not labeling or commenting
- Is based on Skinner's analysis of verbal behavior

Phase I: *How to Communicate*

- Goal: Approach people to initiate communication
 - To teach initiation, use 2-person prompting procedure
- Teach 3-step sequence
 - Pick up, reach, release
- One picture at a time
 - No discrimination



Phase II: Distance and Persistence

- Communicative Partner moves away from student
- Picture- on communication book- moved further from student (still **single** pictures, no discrimination)
- Persistence taught
- Variety of people, activities, locations, reinforcers involved

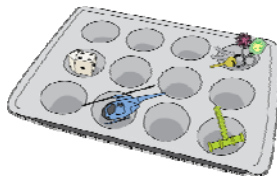
IIIA: Simple Discrimination

- Motivation to use correct picture = getting desired item & avoiding undesired item
- Remember to reinforce at 1st indication of choice!
- 4 Step Error Correction Procedure for mistakes



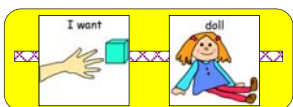
Phase IIIB Conditional Discrimination

- Discrimination between equally reinforcing
 - Conduct Correspondence Checks
 - Use 4-step Error Correction Procedure following mistakes



Phase IV: Building Sentences

- "I want" + reinforcer picture put on sentence strip
- Entire strip given to adult



Attributes

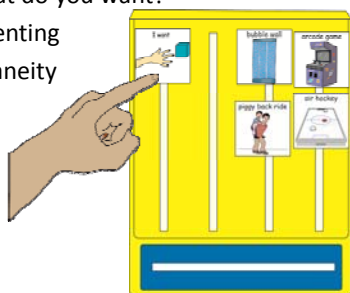
- Teach students to request very specific reinforcers
- Increase sentence length through attribute combinations
- Receptive mastery not a prerequisite!



Phase V

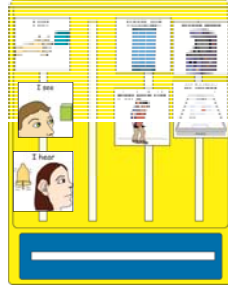
Answering "What do you want?"

- Answering "What do you want?"
- Leads to Commenting
- Maintain Spontaneity



Phase VI Commenting

- Answering “comment” questions
 - “What do you see/have/hear/feel?”
 - “Discriminating between commenting Sentence Starters and requesting Sentence Starter
- Spontaneous commenting and requesting



Modality Transitioning

PECS to Speech or PECS to SGD

Students tell us when they are ready!

Criteria:

1. Spoken vocabulary = PECS vocabulary
2. Rate of initiation is equal
3. Length of utterance is equal
4. Speech is 80% intelligible to unfamiliar listener
5. *Speed of utterance is as fast or faster with new modality*

Do NOT take away skills!!

Research-based benefits of use of PECS

- Facilitates acquisition of speech
- Increases social approach during play
- Reduces Behavior Management Targets rates (even when not specifically addressed)
- Is easily understood in community and by peers

PECS Myths and Misconceptions

- *If we're using pictures of any kind, we're using PECS.*
- *We're using a visual schedule, so we're using PECS*



PECS Myths and Misconceptions

- *PECS just teaches people to request.*



- *PECS is only for people who don't speak at all.*
- *PECS is only for young children.*



PECS Myths and Misconceptions

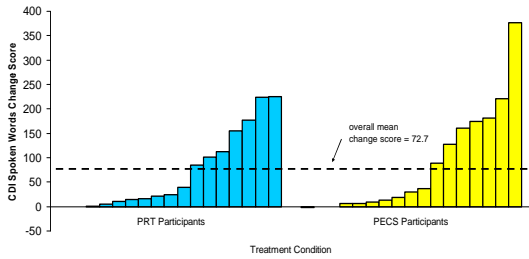
- *If we use PECS, the person using the system won't learn to speak.*
- *PECS is only for people with autism*



Comparison of PECS and PRT

- Schreibman, Koegel, Stahmer & Koegel (in preparation)
- Comparison of two commonly-used early communication interventions
 - PRT is vocally based; PECS is visually based
 - 39 children with autism
 - Mean age = 29.21 months, SD = 5.67
 - ≤ 10 functional words
 - Stratified randomization matched on:
 - Early word use, developmental level, age
 - 258 hours of treatment across 23 weeks (~6 months)
 - 14 hours per week consisting of:
 - 4 hours parent training
 - 10 hours in-home intervention
 - Follow-up assessments after 3 month

Individual Participant Response Patterns in PRT and PECS



Pyramid Workshops

- PECS Basic Training (2-day)
- Advanced PECS Training
 - PECS Review, Practice and Problem Solving
 - Incorporating PECS Across the Day
 - PECS Implementer and Supervisor Certification
- The Pyramid Approach to Education
- Pyramid Topics including
 - Critical communication skills, Behavior Intervention, Asperger's syndrome, Language of Emotion, Parent training, Analyzing Language (using Skinner's *Verbal Behavior*), Organizing and managing classrooms, and more

Follow Up Options

- PECS Message Board
- Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) in Manual and on website: www.pecs.com
- On-site consultation
- Consultation via phone or web
- Host your own workshop too!

www.pecs.com

Please visit

<http://www.pecs.com/Research.htm>

for PECS related research publications