

# **The Use and Benefits of PECS**

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## **Skinner's Verbal Behavior and its Relation to PECS**

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Picture Exchange Communication System was developed to teach functional communication skills. Core elements include:

- Functional activities
- Powerful reinforcers
- Functional communication
- Alternative behaviors

Important components include:

- Generalization
- Sequential, discrete and incidental lessons
- Clear teaching strategy minimal use of prompting
- Minimizing and correcting errors
- Reinforcement assessments
- Data collection
- Listener/facilitator mediates access to reinforce

Advantages of PECS

- Requires social interaction
- Encourages student initiation with limited prompting
- Begins with requesting not labeling which is motivating
- Based on Skinner's Verbal Behavior
- Increases sentence length
- Receptive mastery is not a prerequisite

Research from 130 published articles and 70 case studies support the use of PECS because it:

- Facilitates the acquisition of speech
- Increases social approach during play
- Reduces unwanted behavior
- Is easily understood in the community and by peers
- Encourages sound production and speech for many students

Students should begin to transition away from PECS when speech vocabulary, rate of initiation and length of utterances are equal and at least 80% of speech is intelligible to the untrained listener.