

# Picture exchange training program

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## Client

Joey is a 3 year old child who has been diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). In February of 2009 he began to attend Renaissance Learning Centre which is a charter school for children specifically diagnosed with

ASD. He has no verbal language, no sign language and no Picture Exchange training. Therefore he came to us with no means of communication. He is a happy and affectionate child who makes regular eye contact and is reinforced by physical contact, tickles, hugs and kisses. He is a good eater, meaning he does not have food selectivity issues or inadequate nutrition.

Joey does not stay seated during most activities and responds with grabbing, crying, and eloping when verbal commands or physical redirection to comply to the instruction are given. Due to this we would like to see Joey be able to exchange for a break during these times or use a token system for sitting and complying during academic activities. In order to achieve this we need him to be able to exchange a picture for a preferred item or activity. This program was decided on because it should increase his communication skills by allowing him to independently request and should build the foundational skills necessary for progress in the classroom.

Figure 1. Joey



## Procedure

### Set-up

- ◆ At the beginning of lunch set out the items Joey has in his lunch box and tell him to pick one. The item that he picks will then be used for training.
- ◆ Place his PECS book on the desk within arms reach, to the left of the PECS book place his plate.
- ◆ Leave the item to be requested in your lap so that it is visible.
- ◆ Place the PECS symbol (or symbols depending on the step) in random spots on the front of the PECS book. Follow directions in current step.
- ◆ Sit within 1 foot of the child.
- ◆ Give the instruction: "What do you want?" Then provide indicated prompt level.

**Correct Response:** The child will remove the picture of the reinforcing item from the front of the PECS book, locate the hand and release the picture into the palm.

**Mastery criteria:** 2 consecutive data points at 90% or above (1 data point consists of a minimum of 10 trials)

### Prompt Hierarchy:

- a.) Full Physical – Guide the child's hand to the PECS symbol, clasp their fingers around the picture, guide their hand to your palm and release their fingers around the PEC so that it drops into your palm.
- b.) Initiation – Guide the child's elbow in the direction of the PECS symbol
- c.) Gestural - point to the PECS symbol
- d.) No Prompt

### Steps

**1a – 1d:** 1 picture symbol on the front of the book and an open palm on the table.

**2d:** 1 picture symbol on the front of the book and both hands palm down on their person (lap, knees, leg etc.)

**3b – 3d:** 2 picture symbols of different reinforcing items on the front of the book. Mediator will have both hands palm down on his/her person.

**4c – 4d:** 3 picture symbols of different reinforcing items on the front of the book. Mediator will have both hands palm down on his/her person.

**5c – 5d:** 1 picture symbol of a reinforcing item and 2 distracter picture symbols (non-reinforcing items). Mediator will have both hands palm down on his/her person.

## Results and Conclusions

As you can see from the graph the acquisition of the picture exchange was successful and drastically increased from baseline. Joey is now independently exchanging picture symbols for reinforcing objects from a field of three. New programs increasing the distance of the communicative partner, the variety of objects to request, and being able to request an item from a page inside his book should be started.

According to the data the skill was acquired fairly quickly by Joey and this speedy acquisition would indicate that the choice of picture symbols as a communicative method for him was a good choice. This also indicates that future progress in this communication method should occur.

## Literature Reviewed

Carr, E.G. & Durand, V.M. (1985). Reducing behavior problems through functional communication training. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis* 18(2) p. 111-126.

Hart, B. & Risley, T.R. (1975). Incidental teaching of language in preschool. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis* 8(4) p. 411-420.

Bondy, A. & Frost, L. (2001). The Picture Exchange Communication System. *Behavior Modification* 25(5) p.725-744.

## Materials

The items in the child's snack/lunch were used as the items to be requested. 2"x2" Picture symbols for each food Joey brought in were made in Boardmaker using photographs of the actual food or graphic representations. A label for each food was printed above each symbol. His picture exchange book was a 10"x9" three ring binder with 3 Velcro strips running vertically up the front of the book. The teacher also needed a data sheet, pen/pencil and a copy of the program to refer to.



Figure 2. Examples of picture symbols used during the procedure.

## Results

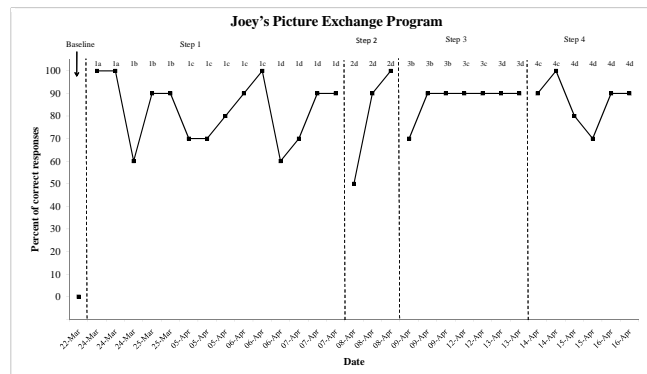


Figure 3. Percent of trials completed with a correct response for the given prompt level and step level.

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## For further information

Please contact cookjv@mcmaster.ca.