



Ecological Approach



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DEFINITION



Providing services and interventions for the child in their natural environment and context, such as at home, school, or in the community



The child does not have to be removed from their natural context to obtain the services

This principle is one of the 10 evidence-based principles, identified in a scoping review, that can guide the organization and delivery of services for students with disabilities in integrated classrooms.

Examples

In-vivo medical consultations provided at home or at school for young children with developmental disabilities and chronic conditions (Bagnato et al., 2014)

Practicing vocational skills in a real work setting in the community with students with emotional or behavioural difficulties (Nochajski & Schweitzer, 2014)

On-site evaluation of motor and functional abilities of students in their class, playground, gym, and within the school (Missiuna et al., 2015)

Evidence & Outcome

In combination with other principles, following an ecological approach:

Increases cognitive skills (Ratzon et al., 2009)

Improves behavioural skills and decreases problematic behaviours (Han et al., 2005)

Improves social-emotional functioning and impacts attendance and suspensions (Ballard et al., 2014)

Application Ideas

Coordination of all services provided to students and provision of those services in students' natural settings

Through external support: mobilizing community resources or agencies to provide services in student's context (ex: OTs/physiotherapists/speech therapists of schools or community who come to school to offer sessions for the students)

Through internal support: ongoing exchange of information with everyone involved with students (parents, teachers, other school staff such as bus drivers, lunch hour supervisors, etc.)