

# Defining Embedded Instruction and Considering Applications in PBS

Tara McLaughlin & Diane Ryndak University of Florida

## Background

Embedded instruction (EI) is a term used in early childhood and severe disabilities. The same term might have different meanings in research and practice.

### Other approaches that refer to embedding:

- Individualized Curriculum Sequencing (Mulligan, Guess, Holvoet, & Brown, 1980)
- Transition-Based Teaching (Wolery, Doyle, Gast, Ault, & Simpson, 1993)
- Building Blocks (Sandall & Schwartz, 2002)
- Activity-Based Instruction (Losardo & Bricker, 1994)

## Literature Review

A systematic literature review was conducted to identify:

- ☐ how the term EI was defined.
- ☐ how the definition influenced the planning, implementation and evaluation of EI.

13 studies met the following criteria:

- ☐ Implemented EI for students with significant disabilities including early childhood and school age
- ☐ Used single subject research
- ☐ Reported student outcome data

## Findings from Review

Four major themes about embedded instruction:

- ▶ EI defined and applied in two distinct ways
- ▶ Both EI approaches associated with acquisition of targeted skills for learners
- ▶ Differences might relate to curricular goals:
  - supporting engagement, learning, participation, and independence in naturally occurring activities
  - “mastering” curriculum content
- ▶ Key features across both applications

## Embedding Into Activities or Routines

### Definition:

Instruction that occurs within on-going naturally occurring activities or routines without breaking the flow of the routine

### Discriminating Feature:

Emphasizes embedding in contexts or activities that are meaningful to the learner without interrupting learner’s engagement

### Key Features of Research:

- ❖ Instruction integrally linked to the activity/context
- ❖ Variety of systematic instructional procedures (CTD, SLP, MLP, SP, ELO)
- ❖ Typically used in early childhood settings

### Examples in PBS:

- ❖ Small group of children, including target child, playing in block area. Teacher asks target child to share blocks with a peer to build a tower. Teacher uses SLP.
- ❖ During snack, teacher puts utensils needed slightly out of child’s reach and prompts the child to verbalize to obtain utensils after child uses gesture to request utensils. Teacher uses incidental teaching procedures.

## Embedded Instruction in PBS:

- ▶ Quality instruction is an important aspect of positive behaviour support for overall student achievement
- ▶ Embedded instruction procedures can be used to teach and practice critical social, emotional, and/or communication skills to support appropriate behaviors for students at the secondary and/or tertiary levels

## Embedding Between Activities or Routines

### Definition:

Instruction that occurs during naturally occurring opportunities such as breaks during activities or transitions from one activity to another

### Discriminating Feature:

Uses activity breaks or transitions as context for embedding learning trials; does not emphasize meaningful engagement in activities

### Key Features of Research:

- ❖ Instruction is peripherally related to the context
- ❖ One systematic instructional procedure (CTD)
- ❖ Typically used in school-age settings

### Examples in PBS:

- ❖ Teacher passing out worksheets at beginning of language arts class. Para-educator provides brief practice trials on asking a peer for help with a worksheet using Mand-model procedures.
- ❖ Student asked to identify emotions (e.g., anger, happy, sad) as class transitions from lecture to small group activities during health class.