

**Recreational Therapy Evidence Based Practice Day Conference**  
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**Supporting Students with Learning Disabilities Using the Flourishing Through Leisure  
Model**

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**Introduction**

From 2000-2005 the number of students between the ages of 3 and 21 who received special education services offered under the IDEA increased from 6.3 million to 6.7 million, then to 7 million as of 2018, which constituted 14% of all public school students. (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). The percentage of public school children with disabilities continues to increase. Unfortunately, schools may lack the proper resources to provide a fully inclusive setting for these students to grow and learn. Students with disabilities may face limitations while trying to succeed in the classroom and/or school setting, which can decrease domains of well-being such as physical, social, emotional, cognitive, spiritual and leisure. They may be unaware of the strengths and resources that they can use to flourish within their school environment. Though recreational therapy is provided in many different healthcare and human services settings and facilities, there seems to be a noticeable lack of recreational therapy in public school settings (Hawkins et al., 2012). Implementing recreational therapy programs, specifically using the *Flourishing Through Leisure Model: An Ecological Extension of the Leisure and Well-Being Model*, will create an inclusive environment for students where they can grow, learn and flourish.

**Explanation of conceptual/theoretical framework**

The *Flourishing Through Leisure Model: An Ecological Extension of the Leisure and Well-Being Model* is a strengths-based approach that focuses on both the individual, and their environment (Anderson & Heyne, 2012). Specifically, it focuses on enhancing the individual's leisure experiences and developing their personal strengths and resources. Using this model, the RT can enhance the leisure experience through "facilitation of leisure skills and knowledge" and "facilitation of leisure environments" (Traci et al., 2016). The RT also uses strengths of the individual and resources within the environment that can be facilitated through leisure to positively impact the individual's well-being in all domains (Traci et al., 2016).

**Application and translation of research/concept/theory in RT practice**

There are many ways in which applying this model in recreational therapy practice within a school setting would be beneficial for students with disabilities. According to Etzel-Wise and Mears (2004), using this model will allow students with disabilities to participate in education programs that will teach them about their own strengths and skills, as well as provide resources on leisure opportunities they can participate in (Etzel-Wise & Mears, 2004). Also, professionals within the school system can evaluate classrooms and the school environment in order to determine if adaptations and modifications need to be made in order to be a fully inclusive setting for students with disabilities that will allow them to succeed and thrive (Etzel-Wise & Mears, 2004). This model guides the RT in facilitating leisure that will produce positive outcomes in all domains of well-being, as well as adapt and modify the environment in order to make the setting as inclusive as possible. Once these positive outcomes are produced, children with disabilities will be able to grow and flourish within their classroom.

Within a recreational therapy program, students with disabilities would have the opportunity to participate in leisure education, leisure and recreation interventions, and adapted and modified activities through this model. After assessment of leisure functioning and functioning within the classroom, the RT would determine a treatment plan, including adaptations and modifications, that would best meet the students need to successfully learn and participate. This treatment plan would focus on facilitating leisure skills and knowledge, creating an accessible and inclusive environment, developing strengths that the client already has and developing and enhancing resources that the school has that would be beneficial to the student. The RT would then begin implementing interventions and activities that the student could use within the classroom, at home and in the community that would coincide with the components of the model and produce beneficial outcomes for the student.

## Tables/Figures

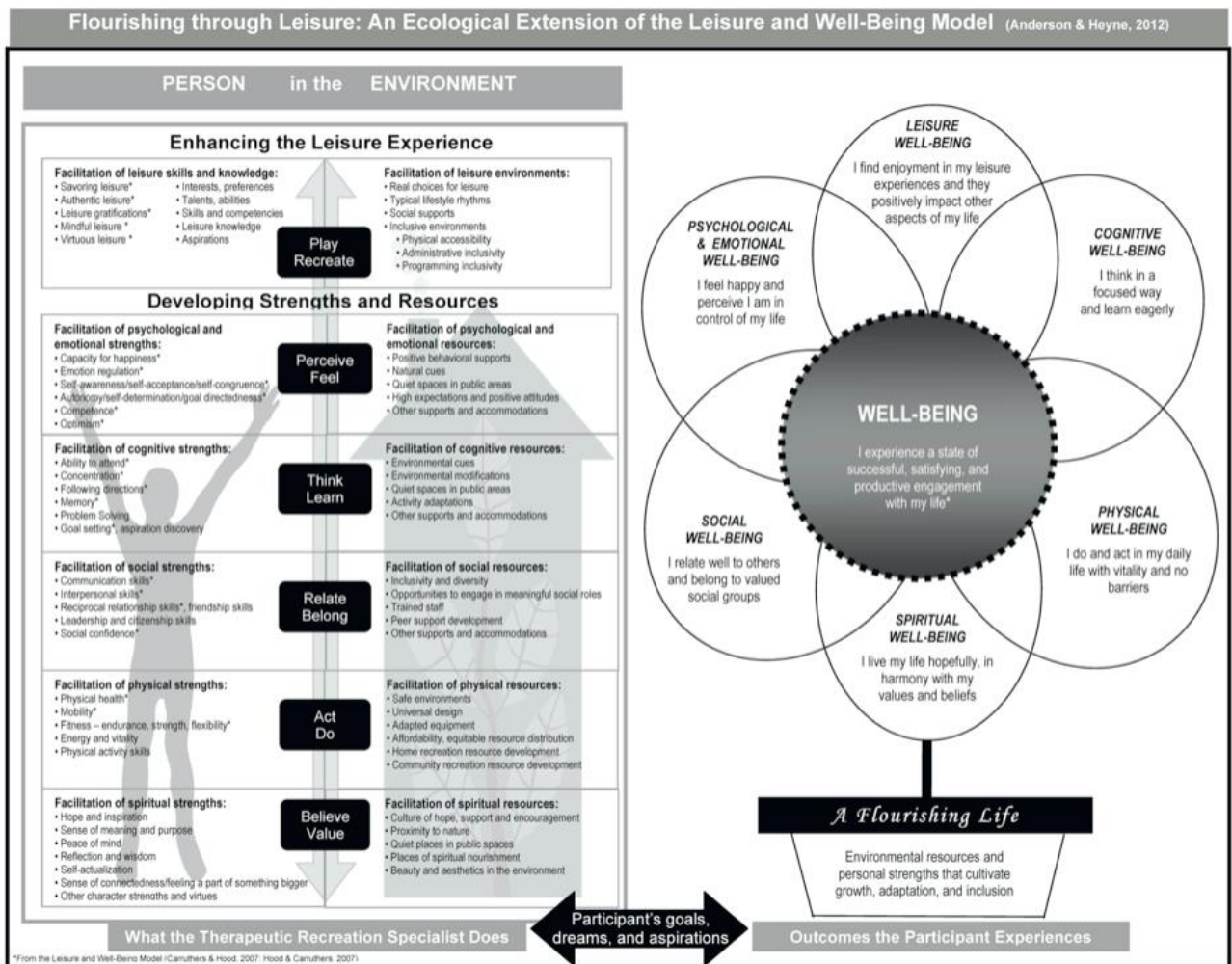


Figure 1 (Traci et al., 2016)

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