

ED6902 Session 4 Discussion: Let's try it!

By Marc the librarian

I'm going to start by restricting myself to the terms you've supplied and trying to use as many of them as possible. So let's break the question down into component parts, and then put it back together again.

It seems that overall we're researching those factors or conditions that contribute to (or take away from):

(Ideal) classroom environment, classroom design

The *contributing factors* you've identified are in **bold** below, and I've placed in brackets some qualifying (adjective-like) terms related to them:

A- Classrooms/spaces/classes/environment

(Qualified by: individual / communal / common / public / joint / partitioned / small / cramped / open / restricted / shared / neighbouring)

B- Distractions

(Qualified by: external / limited space / noise)

C- Effects / disadvantages / outcomes

D- Students

So we want to find articles (and books, perhaps) that discuss the relationships between factors A, B, C, and D in order to learn more about creating or designing better classroom environments. In other words, we are looking for A+B+C+D.

For each of our first three factors (A,B,C), we have identified a number or potential search terms that are equivalent, more or less, in value. In A, for example, we might search for instances of "classrooms" or "spaces" or "classes" or "environment". In each case, we hope to find the same kind of information. But not only that: we are looking for information of a certain kind about "classrooms", etc., namely when they are "individual" or "communal" or "common", etc.

With B we are concerned with looking for information on "distractions", whether these be "external", "limited space", or "noise".

And so on for C and D.

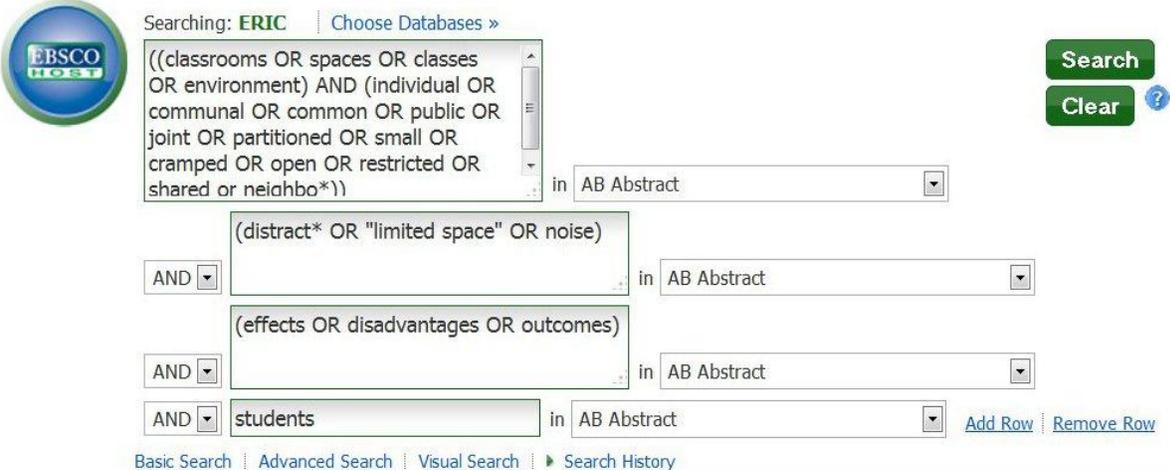
So we are using **AND** to link the factors A, B, C, and D, while within each factor we are looking for one or more of any of the synonymous terms and their qualifying or adjective terms – for this we use **OR**.

Let us illustrate how this is going to look when searching ERIC-EBSCO – it is turning out to be more stable than ERIC-ProQuest and easier to link to RefWorks (if this is something you choose to use, and it is simply a choice):

Access to ERIC-EBSCO at UNB:

<http://www.lib.unb.ca/eresources/index.php?id=9&doSearch=1&sub=indexes&limitResourceType=indexes&submit=GO>

An example search might be:



The screenshot shows the EBSCO search interface. At the top left is the EBSCO logo. The search bar contains the text: "Searching: ERIC | Choose Databases >". Below the search bar is a large text input field containing a complex search query: "((classrooms OR spaces OR classes OR environment) AND (individual OR communal OR common OR public OR joint OR partitioned OR small OR cramped OR open OR restricted OR shared or neighbo*))". To the right of this field is a dropdown menu set to "in AB Abstract". Below this are three more rows of search criteria, each starting with an "AND" dropdown and a text input field. The first row contains "(distract* OR 'limited space' OR noise)" in "AB Abstract". The second row contains "(effects OR disadvantages OR outcomes)" in "AB Abstract". The third row contains "students" in "AB Abstract". To the right of the third row are "Add Row" and "Remove Row" links. At the bottom left are navigation links: "Basic Search", "Advanced Search", "Visual Search", and "Search History". On the right side of the interface are two green buttons: "Search" and "Clear".

Note that:

- **A, B, C,** and **D** are in each of four search boxes. Each is separated from the others by “AND” and each is searching the Abstracts (or summaries that accompany the citations in ERIC). This can be helpful in limiting a search to its topical essence. This was an informed, if perhaps arbitrary, decision on my part. I like to think of search as more art than science.
- **A** looks a little confusing, so let’s break it down:
 - **A1:** (classrooms OR spaces OR classes OR environment) – we are looking for any one of these terms.
 - **A2:**(individual OR communal OR common OR...neighbor*) – we are looking for any one of these terms, and with the last term we are using a wildcard symbol that will search for variants in the spelling of neighbor/neighbor.
 - We’ve wrapped the two bracketed groups above in their own brackets and joined them with an AND like so ((**A1**)AND(**A2**))
- With **B**, I’ve used “distract*” with the * to catch spelling variants such as distracting, distraction(s), distracted, etc. I’ve placed “limited space” in quotes because I want to search for the words as a phrase.

- You don't have to get this complicated! Maybe I am just showing off, but I wanted to try and incorporate everything you suggested and highlight some strategies.

When I ran this search I received a couple dozen results and the first few did not look like they were on topic. Words or terms can be taken to mean different things in different contexts, and we've provided quite a mouthful for ERIC to chew on. There isn't one perfect search strategy but what I like to do initially is search broadly to see whether I find one or two interesting articles that I will then examine to see what **subject terms** have been applied.

Subject terms are usually from a controlled vocabulary that pulls together items that are alike topically regardless of whether the terms appear in the title or abstract of the article. Since words can be taken to have more than one meaning, using the **subject terms** can help focus a search – once we know what those subjects are.

In this case I like the looks of records 10 and 11, and we can see that "Educational Facilities", "School Buildings", "Educational Change", "Educational Environment", "School Size" might help focus our search where factors **A** are concerned. Others such as "Teacher Student Relationship" and "Academic Achievement" might be worth using in follow up searches as well.

10.  **Do K-12 School Facilities Affect Education Outcomes? Staff Information Report.** 
 . By: Young, Ed; Green, Harry A.; Roehrich-Patrick, Lynnisse. 2003 40 pp. (ED479494)
 Full Text from ERIC
 Report Subjects: Academic Achievement; Educational Facilities; Environmental Influences; Physical Environment; School Buildings
 Database: ERIC
 Remove from folder | Relevancy:

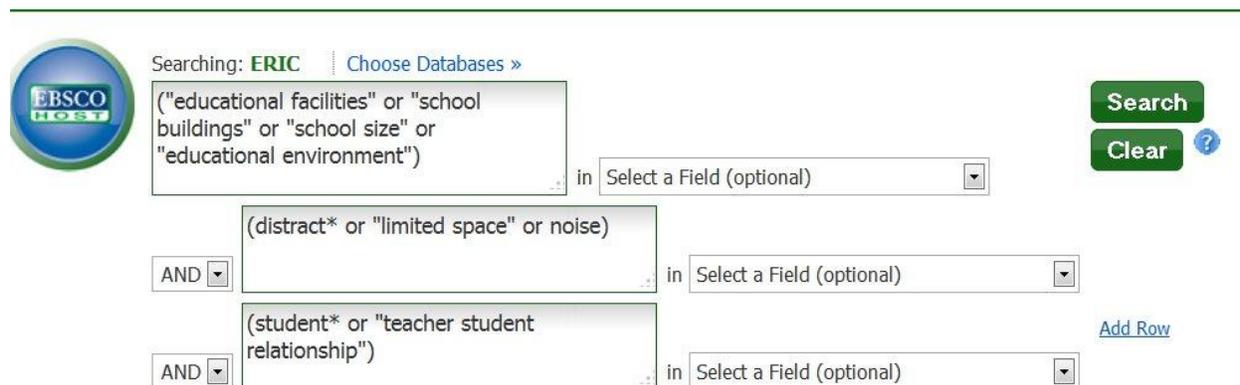
11.  **Inhibitions within Idea Generating Groups: An Alternative Method of Brainstorming.** 
 . By: Kochery, Tim. 1996 11 pp. (ED397806)
 Full Text from ERIC
 Report Subjects: Brainstorming; Communication Apprehension; Creative Activities; Criticism; Grade 7; Group Activities; Group Discussion; Inhibition; Junior High Schools; Problem Solving; Productivity; Verbal Communication
 Database: ERIC
 Add to folder | Relevancy:

12.  **Does It Matter Where Our Children Learn?** 
 . By: Duke, Daniel L.. 1998 36 pp. (ED418578)
 Full Text from ERIC
 Editorial/Opinion Subjects: Academic Achievement; Aesthetics; Educational Change; Educational Environment; Educational Facilities Design; Elementary Secondary Education; School Safety; School Security; School Size; School Space; Teacher Student Relationship
 Database: ERIC
 Add to folder | Relevancy:

13.  **'Change of Heart!': A New E-Learning Model Geared to Addressing Complex and Sensitive Public Health Issues** 
 . By: Hillier, Dawn; Mitchell, Alice; Millwood, Richard. Innovations in Education and Teaching International, v42 n3 p277-287 Aug 2005. (EJ691677)
 Subjects: Risk; Public Health; Distance Education; Thinking Skills

I thought that 9 of the records looked promising and I've listed them in a RefShare document here: http://refworks.scholarsportal.info/refshare2?site=010251141189200000/undefined367377/TT_6902
 If you click on the magnifying glass icon at the end of each of the nine records, you can view the full record and see the Subject terms that have been used.

Taking a look at a few of the Subjects these records are using, I've revised my search like so:



Searching: ERIC [Choose Databases »](#)

Search query: ("educational facilities" or "school buildings" or "school size" or "educational environment") in Select a Field (optional)

AND (distract* or "limited space" or noise) in Select a Field (optional)

AND (student* or "teacher student relationship") in Select a Field (optional)

Buttons: Search, Clear, Add Row

Note that I've removed C terms because they seemed a little restrictive, since items touching on the other factors are likely going to treat the effects/disadvantages/outcomes of the situation and I haven't found any subject terms I'm confident will catch all potentially good records.

Now we have what appears to be a more usable set of results to examine – about 100 items, many of which are fairly focused on our topic.

Can you revise the search, based on subject terms and search strategies elaborated here, to come up with a better set of results?