



ECHO Session Date: 12/18/2025

Thank you for presenting your student at ECHO Idaho – K12 Supporting Students with Autism session. Please keep in mind that your School District policies and Health Services procedures, medication administration protocols, process guidelines, remain the guiding principles to your practice.

After review of the case presentation and discussion of this student's case among the ECHO Community of Practice, the following suggestions have been made:

Student Grade Level: K-2

Summary:

This early elementary student with an ASD diagnosis is in a self-contained classroom all day and is on an IEP with accommodations including extended time, separate testing with a familiar adult, frequent sensory breaks, and use of a choice board. The student is essentially non-verbal, communicating primarily through echolalia, with limited eye contact or interaction with peers or adults, and significant difficulty with transitions and following a schedule, often becoming distressed during changes or non-preferred activities. Strengths include strong interest and sustained engagement in coloring, a love of singing and music, enjoyment of bubbles, and emerging academic skills such as letter and number identification. The student comes from a Spanish-speaking home but primarily uses English words learned from songs and television. They are receiving external speech-language services and parents hope for meaningful functional communication and independent toileting, while school goals focus on establishing a consistent schedule, improving transitions, and developing reliable communication strategies to express wants and needs.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Core Communication & AAC Recommendations

- Start with concrete choice-making using real objects, not pictures (e.g., choosing between two shirts, foods, or crayons).
- Build symbolic understanding gradually:
 - Pair the chosen object with its picture.
 - Model pointing to the picture while labeling it verbally.
 - Emphasize receptive understanding first before expecting expressive use of pictures.
- Reduce visual complexity:
 - Replace a field of 5 symbols with a field of 2 highly preferred choices.
 - Gradually increase to 3–4 symbols only after mastery.
- Model AAC consistently without expectation:
 - Adults point to pictures while talking throughout the day (choices, routines, transitions).
- Use bilingual symbols (English & Spanish) at school and home with consistent visuals.



Family Engagement & Home-School Connection

- Family strategies should be offered as options and modeled collaboratively, respecting family capacity and priorities (Spanish-speaking household).
- Coach parents to use object-based choices at home (clothing, food, drinks).
- Send pictures home of favorite items/activities to support carryover.
- Focus on relationship-building with the family and validating parent expertise.
- Consider peer parent support, ideally bilingual.

Transitions & Regulation

- Transition supports should be individualized based on the child's sensory responses and adjusted if they increase distress.
- As she loves music, considering using music as a transition cue (songs as warnings and signals for change).
- Pair transitions with visual schedules and object cues (e.g., showing snack, lunchbox).
- Minimize wait times during transitions.
- Validate that transitions are hard and provide co-regulation support.

Play, Interests & Motivation

- Preferred activities should be embedded within interaction and learning rather than withheld or overly contingent.
- Protect preschool as a play-based environment, not just kindergarten prep.
- Prioritize sensory-based, child-led play to build regulation, connection, and language.
- Conduct a preference assessment to avoid overusing high-interest items that may lose value when they become demands.
- Track and document interests so they can follow the child into kindergarten.

Behavioral & Educational Supports

- Conduct a Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA) that prioritizes understanding regulation, communication, and environmental factors rather than behavior reduction alone.
- Consider whether the child is new to the school or community, which may affect engagement and sense of safety.
- Identify a safe, trusted adult at school to serve as a base for gradually expanding relationships.

Language Development Considerations

- Echolalia should be acknowledged and validated without pressure to modify form before communicative intent is established.
- Use bilingual books at school and home.
- Try to limit passive screen time; prioritize 3D, interactive experiences (books, play).

Toileting & Self-Care

- Use predictable toileting schedules focused on regulation, not performance.
- Start where the child feels safest (e.g., pull-up) and gradually move toward the toilet.
- Make toileting calm, positive, and sensory-aware.
- Engage occupational therapy for support.

Additional Clinical & Safety Considerations

- Strongly consider private speech and OT services if available/feasible.
- Develop a safety/wandering plan proactively.