



**ECHO Session Date:** 3/5/2026

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.

**You are already providing many critical supports for this student and his family. Thank you!**

**Student Grade Level:** Kindergarten

**Summary:**

A kindergarten student with diagnoses of autism and oppositional defiant disorder (ODD) presents with strong academic abilities and advanced vocabulary, reflecting his twice-exceptional profile, but significant challenges with rigidity, emotional regulation, and peer interactions. Although motivated to play with peers and interested in topics such as sea creatures and venomous animals, he often becomes aggressive or verbally escalates when peers do not follow his rules or when minor frustrations occur, particularly in stimulating environments like the classroom. He spends less than half of his day with general education peers and receives full-time 1:1 paraprofessional support, along with multiple IEP accommodations including visual supports, small-group instruction, frequent sensory breaks, and structured routines. Despite knowing coping strategies such as deep breathing, he struggles to use them when escalated. The student has attended four schools in six months due to behavior concerns and currently receives no outside services.

**Questions for the ECHO panel:**

The school team hopes to increase his successful interactions with peers, extend his school day, and strengthen his ability to use coping strategies, accept routine changes, and seek adult help during conflicts, while seeking guidance on effective social-emotional interventions for students with ODD.

**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:**

**Behavioral & Emotional Regulation Strategies**

- Continue using visual supports such as a 5-point scale and teaching cards to help the student pause, take a deep breath, and think before reacting.
- Focus on teaching flexible thinking, particularly around:
  - Matching emotional responses to the size of the problem (“big deal vs. small deal”).
  - Developing Plan B thinking when things do not go his way.
- Use predictable routines and consistent lesson structures to reduce anxiety and improve participation.
- Reduce frequent corrections and redirections, which may accumulate and lead to escalation.



### **Teaching Tolerance to Disappointment**

- Implement a slow, structured program to build tolerance for disappointment.
- Start with very small, low-stakes activities, such as:
  - Coin flips.
  - Simple games where he occasionally loses.
- Gradually shape coping responses and expand tolerance to larger disappointments over time.
- Practice appropriate language and coping strategies during calm, regulated moments.

### **Peer Interaction Supports**

- Provide structured play opportunities in calm settings, ideally with:
  - One peer at a time initially.
  - Highly structured activities.
- Consider pairing the student with slightly older peers who can serve as positive role models.
- Use guided play with adult facilitation to help him practice flexibility and social problem-solving.

### **Sensory Regulation & Occupational Therapy**

- It is encouraging that an OT evaluation is planned to assess sensory processing and motor needs.
- Focus on regulation before skill-building, as dysregulation prevents access to learned skills.
- Incorporate movement-based regulation opportunities, such as:
  - Climbing
  - Hanging or pulling activities (e.g., monkey bars)
  - Jumping from platforms
- Provide frequent outdoor and movement breaks to widen his window of tolerance.
- Recognize that running may sometimes signal dysregulation rather than simply sensory seeking, and may indicate the need for regulation support.”

### **Instructional & Environmental Supports**

- Offer structured choices instead of yes/no questions, since yes/no prompts often lead to refusal.
  - Example: “Do you want to start with reading or math?”
- Embed choice-making throughout the day to increase the student’s sense of control.
- Integrate social-emotional strategies (e.g., coping tools, emotion regulation language) throughout the day, not only during social skills instruction.

### **Play-Based Learning Approaches**

- Use playful problem-solving activities with adult support to introduce manageable challenges.
- Introduce planned, small disruptions in play to practice coping and flexibility in a supportive environment.
- Use play to expand emotional tolerance and regulation capacity.

### **Family & Parent Support**

- Encourage parent training programs to provide consistent behavioral strategies across home environments, such as:
  - RUBI Parent Training Program
  - ACHIEVE parent curriculum
- Support families in developing consistent routines and expectations across settings when possible.
- Provide parent resources or curriculum that can be used at home.



### **External Services & Wraparound Support**

- Explore community-based services, including:
  - Speech-language therapy for pragmatic language.
  - Occupational therapy.
  - Behavioral services.
- Coordinate school and community providers to improve consistency and regulation across environments.

### **Motivation & Engagement Strategies**

- Consider using Power Cards or interest-based supports (e.g., favorite characters like superheroes or video game characters) to teach social rules and expected behaviors.
- Connect behavior expectations to characters the child admires to increase engagement and understanding.