

A large graphic on the left side of the slide, consisting of two overlapping chevron shapes. The top chevron is yellow and contains the text 'ECHO IDAHO' in white. The bottom chevron is grey and contains the text 'K12 Supporting Students with Autism' in black.

ECHO IDAHO

**K12 Supporting Students
with Autism**

Facilitating Social Inclusion and Peer Interactions for Students with Autism

4/17/2025

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Learning Objectives

- Understanding Social Responses/Dynamics Change Over Time - Challenges
- Identify Opportunities Across the Day for Social Inclusion
- Strategies for Educators to Help Make Social Connections

Social Responses/Dynamics Change Over Time – Challenges for Autistic Students

- K-2nd grade:
 - Play based social interactions
 - Learning to share
 - Learning how to do school
- 3rd grade – 5th grade: shift in peer dynamics
 - More relationship-based interactions
 - Learning to take jokes/compliments
 - Learning to understand the perspective of your friends/others
 - Understanding bullying
 - What are idioms and sarcasm

Social Responses/Dynamics Change Over Time – Challenges for Autistic Students

- Transition to Middle School: mood swings due to hormonal changes
 - Puberty issues (hygiene)
 - Understanding more about humor
 - Understanding flirting/romantic relationships
 - Types of relationships – behaviors based
 - Social cues – what is your behavior telling others, what should other's behavior be telling you??
- High School Social Dynamics: Becoming adults –
 - Finding your true interest/job/passion
 - How to deal with breakups
 - How to deal with annoying coworkers
 - Becoming community members

Opportunities for Social Interactions/Inclusion Across the School Day

- Before school
- Snack
- Lunch
- Recess
- Specials
- Small groups
- Specific social skills groups
- After school activities

Strategies for Educators

- First weeks of school – Teachers should take time to get to know their Autistic students (10-15 minutes here and there, not all at once)
 - Their special interests, how they like to be interacted with, classroom conditions (lights, noise, etc.)
 - Consider more communication with the parents as you're getting to know the student – twice as much as your other students

Getting to Know Your Autistic Student



SCHOOL GUIDE TOOL KIT

"ABOUT ME" PROFILE FORM

Student's Name: _____

What are some of the things that you are most interested in? _____

What upsets you? _____

What are you afraid of? _____

What makes you laugh? _____

What is ONE thing you would like to get better at this year? _____

What advice you desire when you are overwhelmed or upset?

Strategies for Educators

- Younger students – building more communication skills
 - Helping them understand how to react and communicate when something doesn't go their way.
 - Small groups (2 students) or 1:1 instruction
 - Build your relationship first, so they feel comfortable with you
- As students get older, helping students understand what is joking vs bullying
 - Social skills groups
 - Video models
 - Scenarios to role play

Strategies for Educators: Teaching Peers About Autism

- This can be a general presentation about inclusion and autism or student specific (if the family chooses)
- Give family choice to disclose/not disclose their child's diagnosis and/or come and talk to peers
- Books/stories with characters that have autism
- Some students may not want to disclose their diagnosis, some may want to help the class understand their preferences
- Bottom line, include the individual and their family in this discussion and honor their wishes

Strategies for Educators: Using Neurodiversity Affirming Language

Instead of This...	Try This
Restricted/Special Interests	Focused, intense, or passionate interests, areas of interest/expertise
High/low functioning; high/low severity	Describe specific strengths and needs, acknowledge support needs vary across domains
Person first language	Identity first language
Poor eye contact	Prefers to use reduced levels of eye contact/eyes move around the room while speaking
Autism symptoms and impairments	Specific autistic characteristics, features, traits or experiences
Treatment	Support, services, educational strategies
Deficit/Weakness	Area of challenge, difficulty, difference

Bullying

- Over 60% of autistic children and young adults experience bullying.
- Bullying affects a student's ability to learn.
- Bullying based on a student's disability is a form of harassment.
- Disability harassment is a civil rights issue.
- Students with disabilities have legal rights when they are the subject of bullying.
- The adult response is important.
- More than 50% of bullying situations stop when a peer intervenes.
- Self-advocacy is important to teach/develop.

Key Points

- Social dynamics at school change over time, and become complicated
- There are lots of opportunities across the day to help facilitate social interactions
- There are lots of strategies educators can use to help facilitate social interactions/understanding and prevent bullying

References

- Autism Spectrum & Developmental Disabilities Special Interest Group Affirming Language Guidelines
- Autism Speaks School Community Tool Kit