

# Mental Health Promotion in the School Setting ECHO<sup>®</sup>

## Session 1 Notes and Resource Sheet



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### DIDACTIC PRESENTATION

#### ***Supporting Students with Anxiety***

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[Recording](#)

[Presentation Slides](#)

### CASE SUMMARY

We explored the complicated case of a 4yo male in outdoor pre-k with frequent outbursts that disrupt the group and often pull one adult away for extended periods (2+ hours). The child's outbursts are unpredictable, often occur after extended times away and he may have several days in a row that are less challenging. The triggers could be a minor injury, not being first, having to take a turn, feeling like he has done something wrong, doesn't want to gear up to go outside, or who has the biggest lunch box. The behavior will escalate to rage that he will hang on to for hours.

### KEY QUESTION

- How to reduce the intensity of reactions and the duration that he perseverates on his feelings of injustice?

### CLARIFYING QUESTIONS

What is outdoor Pre-K?	<i>Most of their day outside, typically from 9am-1:15pm. Learning and play is outside, along with lunch.</i>
Has the family investigated an OT evaluation? Are there OT interventions that could pre-empt an outburst or behavior?	<i>This student was evaluated by CDS at age 3, he was not found to be eligible for any services as OT is not allowed to be a "stand alone" service. We (School) are seeking a medical model for OT evaluations and services.</i>
Could lack of confidence be a trigger for this student?	<i>Yes! He has refused to do some activities if he perceives his peers are able to do it, and he cannot or if he cannot do it well.</i>
Does he have siblings?	<i>Yes, he has 3 older siblings attending middle school and high school. His rage sometimes seems to mimic that of how a teenager may react, slamming doors and saying "whatever", other "colorful" language</i>
Does the child use a token board?	<i>No, this sounds interesting.</i>
What is the communication like with the family?	<i>Teachers talk with the family 2-3 times/week, daily texting back and forth. He can earn the ability to build with Lego's and to send a picture home to mom.</i>
What is the standard response to rage?	<i>It depends, but we have tried: moving him elsewhere, calling for additional help, we do get low and stay soft when speaking to him. Today, when he disrupted the class teacher said, "I can feel you are upset, it is making me worried for you... I'm going to take some big deep breaths" This seemed to allow him to be in that moment with her and calm. The behavior specialist is often called to assist as well.</i>

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Big emotions do not include rational thought and we don't do things we would normally do when in this frame of mind.

- Create strategies for repairing relationships with peers and staff, including some transition time to process.
- Consider minimizing talk when behaviors start to escalate.
- Find someone with whom the student can easily connect to for a low-level check-in in the morning and check-out at the end of the day.

Covid has impacted our Pre-K and Kindergarten students who have missed a lot of social and emotional learning opportunities. We cannot motivate someone to have skills they don't have.

- Consider smaller or shorter school days, so success can be built upon by adding more time.
- Allow for transition time, time to decompress after recess; student could be overstimulated from the outdoor play.
- Increase the frequency of positive affirmations.
- Acknowledge positive behavior as close to the behavior as possible.
- Continue to create rewards around favorite activities.
- Continue to use token boards, charts, picture schedules and activities.
  - Visual schedules that are tied to a reward may not work.
  - Try an if/then board that makes statements like... If (this happens) ... then (this). When you feel (X), Do this (Y)... How hot does your engine run – If you are at this level, then....do this.
  - Create a token board that only reflects when he has earned something.
  - Size of the problem - Size of the reaction
  - Zones of Proximity, Zones of Regulation
- Utilize the [collaborative problem-solving method](#).

Process difficulties are often realized in the developing mind of a 4/5-year-old child, and it may be that this child has difficulty with self-regulating because he is very intelligent, but not processing at the same level of his intelligence.

- Reach out to CDS and ask them to reconsider a developmental evaluation.  
<https://www.maine.gov/doe/learning/cds>
- Consider a Sensory Diet that may help.
- Engage him as a leader in the classroom, perhaps give him a "job".

Continue the great job you are doing leveraging the family relationship. Engage them further to explore other supports and services.

- Link the family to coaching services, therapy for family systems, or in home support services that focus on parenting style and needed skill development.
  - The G.E.A.R. Parent Network, a program of Crisis & Counseling Centers, is run by parents for parents providing services for parents of children with emotional and behavioral health concerns.  
<https://gearparentnetwork.org/>
- It is important that the reinforcement at home matches the interventions needed in other settings.

## OTHER RESOURCES

The Explosive Child by Ross Green is great for helping kids like this articulate their needs and gain those lagging skills. <https://drrossgreene.com/the-explosive-child.htm>