

Developing Educator Expertise through ECHO for Exception Authorization Teachers

Wyoming Institute for Disabilities (WIND) Project ECHO



College of Health Sciences
Wyoming Institute
for Disabilities



Presenter Information



Cari Glantz, Education and Families Program Lead,
Wyoming Institute for Disabilities (WIND)
Act Early Ambassador to Wyoming
Charting the LifeCourse Ambassador



Aryn Downs, Special Education Teacher,
Powell Middle School



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Learning Objectives

- Understand the structure and purpose of the ECHO model
- Understand how ECHO sessions can support teachers working under exception authorization licenses
- Apply collaborative problem-solving approaches to real classroom challenges



Wyoming Institute for Disabilities (WIND)

- Established in 1994
- Academic Unit, College of Health Sciences at the University of Wyoming
- University for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD)



12 Years of UW Project ECHO

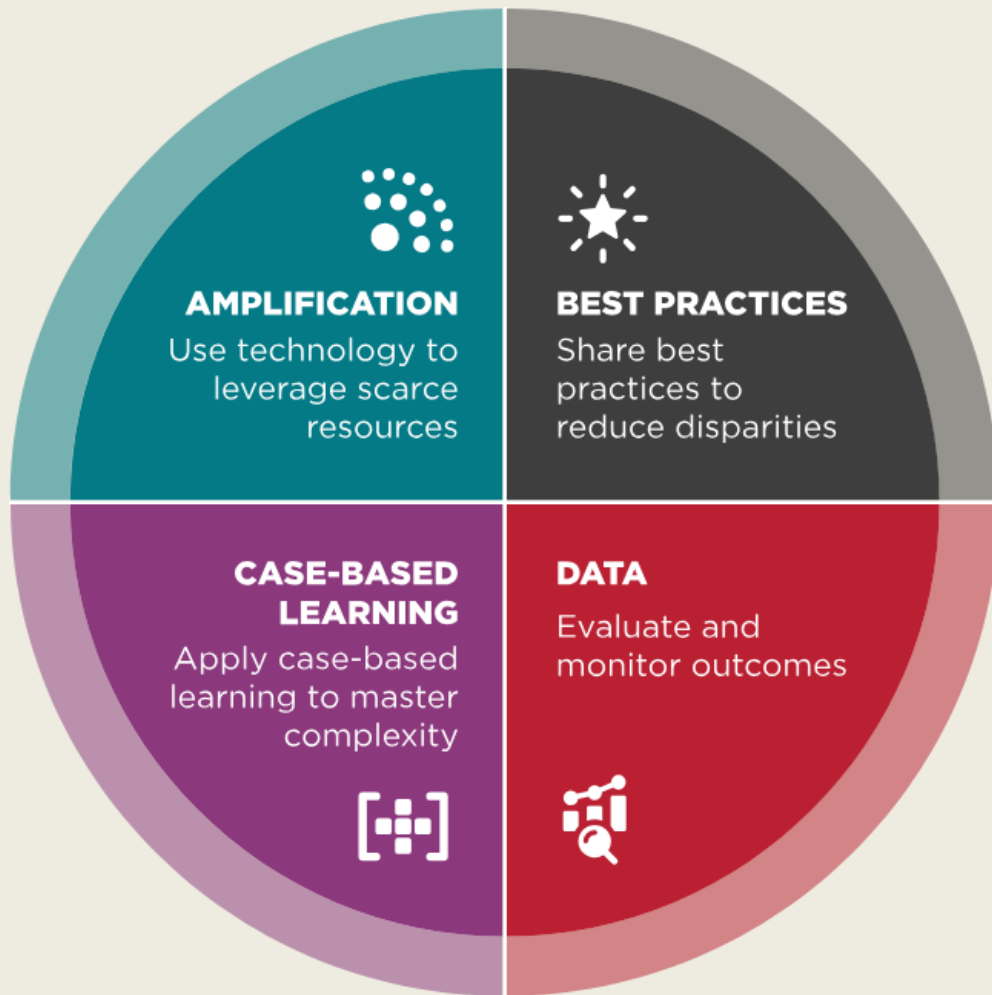
- WIND launched UW Project ECHO in 2014
- First global program to utilize the ECHO model in education: ECHO in Assistive Technology
- WyCOA launched ECHO programs in 2016
- 24 ECHO programs
- 1,400 ECHO sessions
- 1,802 professional development hours
- 1,738 unique participants
- 29,929 total attendance



What is Project ECHO?



The ECHO Model



- Use technology to leverage scarce resources
- Share best practices to reduce disparities
- Apply case-based learning to master complexity
- Evaluate and monitor outcomes



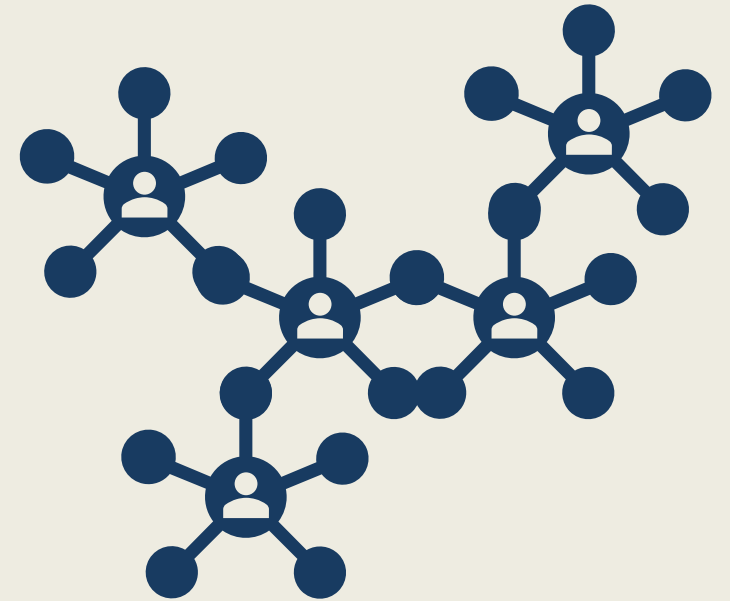
Case-Based Learning: The Heart of Project ECHO

- The case presentation is based on a real-life scenario and is an opportunity for a participant to request advice and recommendations from session participants.
- Opportunity to develop skills and best practices to improve access, quality and efficiency.
- Allows participants to learn through engagement and interaction with their peers and subject matter experts. Session participants can ask clarifying questions and provide feedback to the presenter to foster the “all teach, all learn” approach.
- Focus on a current issue or problem of practice
 - Agency, district, school, classroom, student, individual, systems, stories of success



Impact of Community Learning

- Builds multidisciplinary expertise & perspective
- Develops relationships with other professionals across the state and region
- Safe space problem solving with others
- Your real-life “group text” or “teacher down the hall” to process through challenges or scenarios
- Learning from one another
 - People learning from you!
 - You learning from others



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Knowledge Learning Loop



- UW ECHO Networks provide ongoing support for educators, healthcare providers, and families in a rural state where specialized knowledge is not always locally available.
- Virtual communities provide opportunities for learning, advocacy, and mentorship through professional development presentations and case-based learning.
- Hub and spoke networks create knowledge learning loops where each participant is involved in the “all teach, all learn” approach.



Why ECHO for EA Educators?

- Learn practical, classroom-ready strategies
- Connect with experienced mentors and peers
- Increase confidence in your teaching
- Solve real classroom challenges
- Access ongoing professional learning
- Strengthen instructional and behavior support practices
- Receive guidance while building special education expertise
- Bridge the gap between coursework and day-to-day teaching
- Create a supportive professional network to reduce isolation



ECHO Structure

- Bi-weekly, 75 minutes
- Welcome and Introductions
- Professional Development Presentation
 - 20-30 minutes
- Community Discussion / Case Presentation
 - Information from participant
 - Clarifying questions
 - Strategies, recommendations, resources
- Closing Announcements



ECHO Community Discussion



Primary Challenge

- When you only have one short period a day with students on your caseload, what high-yield strategies or data-collection routines can a new teacher (and their para staff) use to ensure IEP goals, interventions, and related services are met without letting core classwork fall through the cracks?



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Challenges

- Sixth grade resource students meet with their Special Education Teacher/Case Manager once a day for 42 minutes.
- This period is grade-wide and they are not missing any core classes. During the class, all students are expected to work on core class homework/projects.
- For resource room settings, this is when students are pulled for related services, work on IEP goals or work within their intervention program, or work on core classroom work.
- This small window of time, plus the above objectives, can hinder a new teacher's time with individual students or small groups.
- The result - students often fall behind on homework or students do not receive enough consistent time with a teacher or paraprofessional to work on skills needed to be successful.



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Primary Areas of Concern

- Practical routines that support students on IEPs to complete core content work while still providing time for intervention programs and related service minutes.
- Strategies for running small groups within the 42-minute time-block that are realistic to the rigor and pace of middle school.
- Tips for new teachers to manage para staff effectively during resource room periods.
- Strategies or tools that help scaffold/teach students to prioritize and manage coursework during school and/or at home.

Barriers

- New teacher, little experience with 6th grade/Middle School content
- Managing three paraprofessionals
- Finding a classroom routine that works
- Tracking each student's missing work through LMS – Canvas
 - The digital aspect really contributed to confusion for students and ease of use for the teacher to track assignments



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Previous Strategies

- Homework Logbook (paper) - students struggled to find missing assignments on digital LMS. Not successful for entire class, maybe two students who really enjoyed/benefitted from it.
- First (x amount of time) minutes of the period was strictly dedicated to intervention programs or progress monitoring - hard to be consistent when students were pulled for related services or core class interventions after common assessments. Started strong, but students learned quick they could "wait out the clock."
- Priority Board (digital) - each student had a priority board on Google Sheets that had missing/late assignments. Staff updated these in the morning during specials so students had a one stop spot to see their missing/late work. Students struggled with multiple digital platforms (Canvas, priority board) and became confused/frustrated which led to a lack of student interaction with priority board.
- Whiteboard turned into giant at-a-glance calendar for upcoming due dates, color coded by class. This was the most successful for the most amount of students. We still had some students with EF struggles and time blindness regarding the due date. Example: students would check the day, see there was nothing due that day, and think they had time for other assignments.



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Additional Information

- Our district is considering not sending home Chromebooks this year. This is great in so many ways, but I worry it will add stress to the already limited time students have in my room to work on interventions, IEP goals, while maintaining core coursework.
- We use Canvas for all classes; students struggled to learn how to navigate this platform as each classroom teacher had a different style of setting up their Canvas modules.



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Community Discussion – Clarifying Questions



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Community Discussion:

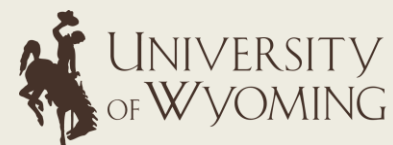
Ideas for strategies, interventions, or resources



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Fall 2026 UW ECHO Preview



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ECHO for Special Education Exception Authorization

- Starting September 1
- Tuesdays, bi-weekly, 3:45pm-5:00pm
- Complement, not duplicate, course work through short PD presentations and community discussions (case studys)
- Topics will include:
 - IDEA and Compliance Monitoring
 - Leadership as an EA and Team Collaboration
 - Development of Effective IEPs
 - Behavior Supports
 - Classroom Management



UW ECHO Programs

- Act Early
- Assistive Technology
- Autism and Positive Behavior Supports
- Autism for Rural Providers
- Communicable Diseases
- Families
- Integrative Care
- Special Education Exception Authorization
- Student Health
- Geriatrics



Professional Development Credits

You must attend the live session and complete the session evaluation to receive professional development credits. Credit cannot be awarded for watching the recordings.

- **PTSB:** 0.5 credit hours per 6 live sessions
 - Act Early, Assistive Technology, Autism and Positive Behavior Supports, Families, Student Health
- **STARS:** 1 credit hour per live session
 - Act Early, Assistive Technology (select sessions), Autism and Positive Behavior Supports (select sessions), Families
- **ANCC Nursing Contact Hours:**
 - Student Health (1.25 contact hours), Integrative Care (1 contact hour), only for live sessions
- **UW Graduate Credit:** Non-degree seeking University credit
 - Attend 12 live sessions and submit a case presentation
 - All UW ECHO programs (except Geriatrics)
- **Certificates of Attendance:**
 - All UW ECHO programs
- **Geriatrics:** Contact wycoa@uwyo.edu about CE/CMEs



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Join UW Project ECHO

- Learn more and register: <http://www.uwyo.edu/wind/echo/>
 - Submit your case presentation or problem of practice
 - Learn how to earn professional development credits
 - Access past session recordings
- Sign up to receive weekly updates from the UW ECHO newsletter
- Create an iECHO account: <https://iecho.org/>
- Join the UW ECHO Orientation
 - Tuesday, August 11 from 12pm-1pm



Questions?

www.uwyo.edu/wind/echo/
projectecho@uwyo.edu
cglantz@uwyo.edu

