

RSU 5 Early Childhood Education Task Force – Meeting Minutes

Date: Wednesday, November 12, 2025

Time: 5:30 – 7:30 p.m.

Location: Pownal Elementary School

1. Welcome and Opening (5:30–5:35) *Re-introductions*

2. Brief Review of State Mandate and Meeting Objectives (5:35–5:40)

- Reiterate mandate to serve children ages 3–5 by July 2028
- Clarify today’s objective: **move from information to initial model exploration**

3. Focused Scope: What We Are and Are Not Deciding Tonight (5:40–5:50)

- Tonight's focus is **Cohort 3 (four-year-olds)** for the **2026–2027** school year
- Explicitly **remove full-day programming questions** from the discussion
- Do **not** include three-year-olds or Child Find evaluation costs in this phase

Outcome: The team can concentrate deeply on one decision, not the entire mandate.

Questions: none

4. Understanding “Cohort 3” (5:50–6:20)

Goal: Establish a shared understanding of the benefits and challenges of potentially joining Cohort 3– assuming responsibility for 4 year olds in the 2026-2027 school year.

- Review of what we will be taking on if we join Cohort 3
- Overview of the state’s support
- Discussion of potential challenges we would face if we take this option

Outcome: Consideration of the pros and cons of joining Cohort 3

Slide 3-discussion. First two bullets: how does that differ from what we are currently doing? We would extend what we are already doing in school. We would be responsible for conducting evals, providing services (OT, Speech, PT, SDI, and possibly SW). We’d be required to pick up case management (paperwork) and there would be more administrative support needed. RSU 5 would be responsible for servicing children in day care settings. We’d be responsible for SPPS programming/financial responsibilities. Transportation if only in their IEP.

Question around what we’d offer and how’d we offer it. The district would need to decide the model of services. What we offer would meet the FAPE requirement.

Question around screening 4 yr olds: do we need to offer more than what we are currently doing? No, you are meeting your Child Find obligation.

Screening would be a big need. It would need to be continuous. MSS does a second round of screening. They tend to come in chunks. Messaging is big.

RSU 5 currently does the evals for Speech, OT, the 5 domain evaluation.

Psych testing happens through the CDS.

Screening takes about 20 minutes and they are scored immediately. We have more opportunities to wait if we have some concerns as we have the EIT who are here and can provide MTSS.

Need to be 4 by Oct 15th to attend Pre-K

3yr olds would be rolling.

Would there be outreach to providers? Yes, we would be responsible for letting providers know.

Slide 6 -discussion. We'd be extending responsibility to RSU 5. Handout provided Current RSU 5 responsibility vs. CDS responsibility.

Question: Based on what we have now, who would we need to hire? Psychologist to complete psych evals and a PT to complete evals.

Reimbursement of \$1,000 per student to outsource an eval to a psychologist. No cost when the special education teacher is completing a 5-domain eval.

Currently 20 active IEPs and servicing 15. Only 5 students who we are not servicing.

Kids at Special purpose pre-schools can remain there and caseload sizes are the same. Speech, OT, PT -50. Special Education Teacher-35

Not always space at a special purpose preschool. Having our own special ed classroom would be beneficial.

*RSU 5 would like to keep as many students here and having our own special purpose pre-k that is public would be beneficial. **3 & 4 yr olds can be serviced together.***

Tom: This is work we will have to do. If we take 4 yr olds next year, we will need to take 3 yr olds the following year.

CDS is keeping ESY. 9/1 we become responsible.

5. Longer-Term Budget and Funding Context (6:20-6:25)

- How allocation funding works
- Connection between **child count** and state funding
- Clarify that increased Child Count increases possible funding

- Review projected enrollment numbers for four-year-olds (enrolled and unenrolled)

Outcome: Shared financial foundation before exploring models.

Funding and Child Count #s

As student numbers grow so does the funding.

If we join cohort 3, there is a buffer if we need more money. That money will not always be there.

Does the funding change? Would we get funding if we didn't have 3yr olds? No, it's based on the amount of students.

Have yearly allocation to build out our program and staff.

One time allocation for furniture and other expenses. Money will run out.

DOE walkthrough to determine what they could offer us for 4 yr old programming.

If we move forward with cohort 3 how does this look next year.

6. Exploring Service Models for Four-Year-Olds (6:25–7:15)

With our current Early Intervention Team (EIT) as the starting point.

Roundtable discussion of scenarios:

- Maintain current scope (EIT continues serving enrolled students only, with wraparound model)
- Shift scope to include **unenrolled** four-year-olds– how would we do this, what would have to change

Guiding questions:

- What support can we reasonably provide with EIT as currently structured?
- Where are the gaps?
- What might partnerships help solve?

7. Consideration of Next Steps (7:15–7:25)

- Preview Meeting #3 focus (narrowing to 2–3 best models and discussing feasibility)

There was a unanimous vote to join Cohort 3.

Questions for the next meeting:

- *What to talk about next:*
- *Full day pre-K*

- *Could we have a hybrid program*
 - *Half day for some*
 - *Full day for students who have a higher need.*
- *Star system for community based providers*
- *What has been successful from the previous cohorts*
- *What is needed for transportation*
 - *Implications for half day to full day*
- *Facility impact from going from a half day to a full day pre k.*
 - *Staffing*
 - *space*

8. Closing (7:25–7:30)

- One sentence: What do you now understand more clearly than you did at 5:30?