

# RSU 5 Early Childhood Special Education

**Early Childhood Education Task Force – Meeting #2**

SAVE *the* DATE



07 01 28

3- 5 YO FAPE & CHILD FIND

RSU 5 OWNER OPERATED

# We have been talking about...

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

# Recap and restate: Part W AND THE OPTIONS

Fully engaged starting July 1, 2028 (which will need some leg work in starting January 2028 even without opting into Cohort 4)

We are speaking specifically designated student population within the confines of Child Find Policy and Special Ed Law

Options along the way include financial and technical support from state.

- 2026 - 2027 4 yo only or 3-4 yr only
- 2027 - 2028 3 - 4 yo only option

# RSU 5's First Major Decision...

## 4. Focused Scope: What We Are and Are Not Deciding Tonight (6:00–6:10)

- 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

## Cohort 3

We would commit to providing Child Find and FAPE to all 4 year old children living within RSU 5 district limits. In return, we would receive the financial and technical.

WHY WOULD WE DO THAT...

## Cohort 3 4 yo only: Risk - Reward

- Access to time-limited funding
- Access to time-limited technical support
- Access to flexibility in managing quarterly allocation needs
- Cushion for mistakes and needs to revamp
- Funds to make key hires, build out systems, and develop policy and procedures
- Only year left to do 4 year old students only
- Momentum
- No 3yo nor Child Find responsibilities
- Paid to build out lasting systems: some before they are required
- FAPE and Due Process
- Some things can start without taking on official responsibility: Community Letters from Office of Instructional Support for example. Joining C-B meetings.
- A 4 year old students only decision carries a smaller child count with nearly half already receiving per student. Those students would only see an 1.5% rise. require less intensive services and less financial support.\$ is based on childcount of those serving. - does the allocation cover what is needed to provide the services?

# Like minds around the field...

## Wisdom from the field: Why others have committed

Assistant Superintendent Windham- Raymond Christine Frost-Bertinet

RSU 6 SPED Director Katie Hawes-

We decided to join Cohort 3 because we want to bring on services for 4 years olds first and then 3 years olds the following year and were told that this was the last cohort with that option. Additionally, it seems this may be the last cohort that will get fully furnished classrooms.

Assistant Superintendent Sanford Steve Bussiere

## Districts who have joined Cohort 3:

RSU 14, Sanford, RSU 6, Portland, Lewiston?, Bangor?, Biddeford

What we do and what we will do...

## Cohort 3 What do for 4 yos now and in 2026 - 2027

We will extend the EIT teams scope by offering the direct service to 4 yo old students in out of school places

- Child Find and referral - already
- We have not discussed providing whole class, small group, and individual student
- EIT team contracts on a per student basis to provide direct service i to enrolled w 4yo students with active IEPs within community schools

## Cohort 3 What we will do for 4 yos in 2026 -2027

Existing team is designed to meet Child Find, referral, MTSS needs, and direct service needs.

- No changes to EIT scope
- Additional hires: 1 Speech, 1 OT, 1 282B, ECSE, ECSE office support
- Engage in Child Find... screening offered to all distinct children and referrals to CDS
- We have not discussed MTSS work in settings outside of RSU 5 schools. (Pyramid?)
- EIT will provide, or RSU 5 will contract for, child find/ eligibility evaluations
- EIT will provide, directly or contracting an entity to, direct service to all 4yo students with active IEPs living within RSU 5 district limits

# How we would do that...

## 6. Exploring Service Models for Four-Year-Olds (6:25–7:00)

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

Small-group discussion of scenarios:

- Maintain current scope (EIT continues serving enrolled students only, with wraparound model)
- Shift scope to include **unenrolled** four-year-olds
- Other hybrid approaches that use existing staff efficiently

## Gaps in current service and Models...

- Speech, OT, 282b capacity to serve 4 year olds not attending schools
- Evaluation of students referred for special education services

Models to address the need to extend current services ...

- Bring 4 year old students to community schools
- Provide services in community settings (Itinerant model)
- Provide a mix of both school based and itinerant services

# Benefits and challenges of building based efforts

Benefits:

Centralized locations

Challenges:

spaces

# Benefits and challenges of itinerant efforts

## Benefits-

Space and teacher - student ratio

Child is seen in a familiar setting

## Challenges-

Travel time

Providing 9 hours of gen ed? (maybe?)

# Benefits and challenges applied to a mixed delivery model

Benefits:

Optimize space

Flexibility in scheduling

Challenges:

Scheduling complexity

# Key Factors: in financing a plan

## 5. Budget and Funding Context (6:10–6:25)

- How allocation funding works
- Connection between **child count** and state funding
- Clarify that increased Child Count increases funding
- Review projected enrollment numbers for four-year-olds (enrolled and unenrolled)

Calculate child count based on historical info and base locations on area childcare facilities if outside of schools

Decide on a model

Decide on resources needed for the model

Build a budget

Make an estimate for allocation

Adjust budget

Enter into an MOU or ... not this year.

# Yearly allocation

- Allocation is based on child count
- Paid quarterly
- Count X per student X 1.5% or more
- Increases as student numbers increase; decrease if student number drops (very unlikely)
- Only covers resources committed to ECSE students
- Early allocation in April (if not before)

A conservative illustration using 20

ECSE 4yr old count: 20

20 4yo x Per student X 1.5%

Annual allocation:

# Child count

## Defined:

- Required for all SAUs
- Submitted Quarterly: 10/1,
- Only ECSE students serving through cohort are in the allocation count
- ECSE count as 11/1

## More data to estimate child count:

Historical student number data for 4 yo enrolled in RSU 5 schools. (Julie- sheet)

Student numbers change from year to year and increase as the academic year moves along

Using the estimated child count for 2026-2027 to design a reasonable budget to submit for funding...

## More Allocation considerations

- The current budget serves a portion of ECSE students. For example, serving 12 enrolled students only increases funding by 1.5% (at a minimum) per student. Serving 15 unenrolled students increases funding inclusive of per student and 1.5%.
- Financing a plan should consider the “real feel” of the allocation when calculating a reasonable budget.
- It has been paid reliably and timely according to current cohort districts
- It can be helpful look at what others have used allocations for - linked example list from codified budget

# Building Based one time funding and grants

First come, first serve to districts in the order they commit to Cohort

Based on pre requisite walk through from CDS

Here is an example of resources allocated to SAUs: [link inventory sheet](#)

Grants for infrastructure/ physical plant work are available while they last. This work is outside of the cohort funding process.

Requisitions for vans are available- also outside of cohort funding process

# Background Knowledge

## 3. Understanding Special Education Processes (5:40–6:00)

*Goal: Establish a shared understanding of key terminology and processes.*

- Overview of essential special education terms
  - Child Find
  - Referral/evaluation
  - IEP qualification and service provision
- Distinguish clearly between:
  - **Child Find/referral** (responsibility to identify)
  - **IEP qualification and delivery of services** (responsibility to educate)

# Child Find first, then Qualification for IEP

## Child Find-

- District already responsible for k-12
- Extend [RSU 5 Child Find](#) to 3-5
- Referrals for evaluation can be made by parents, providers, educators
- CDS received referrals
- Efforts for child find include

## IEP

Special Education services are offered in a legally binding process

- Based on a referral process (Child find)
- Referred for eval
- Eval indicated and completed
- Receive a diagnosis of a qualifying disability
- Demonstrates challenges directly linked to disability

The majority of COHORT 3 work would be with already identified students and the referral process for 4 yo students only. Child Find would extend to move-in and unidentified 4 year old students.

Refer for eval vs part c-b and community child find efforts.

# Background Knowledge: the scope of this decision is about ECSE

Special Education is a service not a location

- Can be provided in community settings  
homes, schools

Special Education services are offered in a legally binding process

- Based on a referral process
- Referred to for eval
- Receive a diagnosis
- Demonstrates academic, functional, developmental challenges directly linked to diagnosis

Special Educations services are offered along a continuum

- Least to most
- Special purpose refers to settings in which all students who are placed require full day program separate, specialized classroom setting from that of typical peers
- 50/50 and transitional classrooms are not special purpose classrooms.