

RSU 5 Early Childhood Education Task Force – Meeting #3 Minutes

Date: Thursday, December 18, 2025

Time: 5:30 – 7:30 p.m.

Location: Durham Community School Cafeteria

1. Welcome and Opening– Re-introductions.

2. Review of Prior Decisions

- Superintendent Gray reviewed the decision made at the last meeting to join Cohort 3 and provided an opportunity for further questions and discussion. The group expressed consensus and continued support for the decision.

3. Presentation of Cohort 3 Models

Presented by Administration:

- RSU 5 Administration presented a slideshow with details of three options for a model of service in joining Cohort 3.
 - Option 1-
 - Offer of FAPE for 4 year olds contingent on enrollment in RSU 5 Prek
 - Services provided in-house, with RSU 5 staff to the greatest degree possible, with some instances of contracted service providers when necessary
 - Addition of a full-day special purpose classroom to meet the needs of identified students who require that setting
 - Option 2-
 - Offer of FAPE for 4 year olds NOT contingent on enrollment in RSU 5 Prek
 - Services could be provided in-house OR pushed into DOE approved community settings, with RSU 5 staff to the greatest degree possible, with some instances of contracted service providers when necessary
 - Addition of a full-day special purpose classroom to meet the needs of identified students who require that setting
 - Option 3-
 - Offer of FAPE for 4 year olds NOT contingent on enrollment in RSU 5 Prek

- Services could be provided in-house OR pushed into DOE approved community settings, with RSU 45 staff to the greatest degree possible, with some instances of contracted service providers when necessary
 - NO special purpose classroom; students whose needs indicate this level of support would be transported out of district for service
- Discussion of staffing and logistical needs of each model. At this point, these are the district's best estimates based on information available. The actual figures may change as more information about possible enrollment, student needs, or state support/guidance become available.
- Financial Overview-
 - RSU 5 Director of Finance Kelly Wentworth presented estimates of the cost of each model and reviewed the funding formula posed by the state.
 - Emphasis on the separate cost stream for the Special Education programmatic costs associated with Early Childhood- the state is offering assurances that these costs would be covered by that revenue stream and not impact local taxpayers

4. Discussion of Models & Decision on Preferred Model

- Roundtable discussion of strengths, challenges, and feasibility of each model
- Superintendent Gray expressed strong administrative support for Option 1 because it will provide superior support for children and families, be logistically simpler, and be lower cost
- The Task Force recognized that there may be associated costs to the district, such as administrative time, general education expenses, facilities and operations expenses, etc., that are not enumerated in the CDS funding stream that may be difficult to quantify, and that may impact the local budget.
- The Task Force strongly encouraged the administration to continue to advocate for every impact to the district to be assessed and covered by the state's funding stream for early childhood.
- **DECISION-** The Task Force voted unanimously to recommend Option 1 to the RSU 5 Board of Directors
 - It was noted that this is a conceptual endorsement of Option 1, with the understanding that on January 12, Maine D.o.E. representatives will meet with RSU 5 administration to review their requests for staffing and supplies and suggest changes.

- The actual staffing needs may vary from the estimate that was discussed at this meeting.

5. Next Steps and Recommendation to the Board

- The Task Force reached consensus that the meeting scheduled for January 7 would not be necessary.
- Superintendent Gray explained that this item will be presented to the RSU 5 Board of Directors at their meeting on January 14, 2026, at 6:30 pm at Freeport High School. Task Force members were encouraged to attend.

6. Adjournment- 7:35 pm