Regional School Unit 5
Durham · Freeport · Pownal

"To inspire and support every learner by challenging minds, building character, sparking creativity, and nurturing passions."

Tom Gray, Superintendent of Schools
Kelly Wentworth, Director of Finance & Human Resources
Erica Mazzeo, Assistant Superintendent of Schools
Elisha Morris, Director of Instructional Support

June 30, 2026

Dear RSU 5 Community,

We hope this letter finds you well and enjoying another beautiful Maine summer. The RSU 5 Office of Instructional Support is looking forward to an exciting year as we continue expanding our services to support our youngest learners. We are writing to share an update on our transition to providing special education services for children ages 4–5 and to outline what you can expect in the coming years.

As a reminder, RSU 5 has joined Early Childhood Special Education **Cohort 3**. This means that under the Maine Unified Special Education Regulations (MUSER) and Child Find requirements, RSU 5 will be responsible for identifying, locating, and evaluating children ages 3–5 who may be eligible for special education services. This transition will occur in two phases to ensure we thoughtfully build our capacity and provide high-quality services for our youngest learners.

Phase One begins in the upcoming 2026-27 school year, when RSU 5 assumes responsibility for providing special education services for eligible four-year-old children. **Phase Two** will begin during the 2027–2028 school year, when RSU 5 expands those responsibilities to include eligible three-year-old children. This phased approach allows us to establish strong systems, expand programming, and ensure we are well prepared to meet the needs of all young learners and their families.

Effective August 31, 2026, RSU 5 will officially assume full legal and administrative responsibility for ensuring a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) for eligible four-year-old children. As part of this transition, the district will oversee all aspects of the special education process, including evaluations, Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings, and all required documentation, such as prior written notices, consent forms, and IEPs. To receive these important services, which may include specially designed instruction (SDI), speech and language therapy, occupational therapy (OT), and physical therapy (PT), **eligible four-year-old children must be enrolled in an RSU 5 Pre-K program**. We are excited to provide these supports within warm, welcoming, and engaging learning environments where children can grow alongside their peers.

The RSU 5 Early Intervention team and our school administrators have been instrumental in preparing for this transition. In addition to providing services within our general education Pre-K classrooms, RSU 5 will open a specialized early childhood classroom for four-year-old students who require more

intensive specially designed instruction and adult support to be successful in the educational setting. This classroom, housed at Morse Street School in Freeport, will be staffed by an early childhood special education teacher and educational technicians and expands our continuum of services, ensuring that every eligible child receives a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE), with programming designed to meet each student's unique strengths and needs.

As we prepare for **Phase Two**, RSU 5 will **reconvene the Early Childhood Planning Task Force** to develop a comprehensive plan for welcoming three-year-old children into our district beginning in the 2027–2028 school year. By serving children earlier, we can build strong educational foundations while strengthening partnerships with families from the very beginning of their child's educational journey.

We will continue to share additional information over the coming weeks, including updates regarding the Early Childhood Planning Task Force and our plans for expanding services to include three-year-old children. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to reach out to Elisha or Donna. We look forward to partnering with you as we continue building high-quality early childhood special education services for the children and families of RSU 5.

Warmly,

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