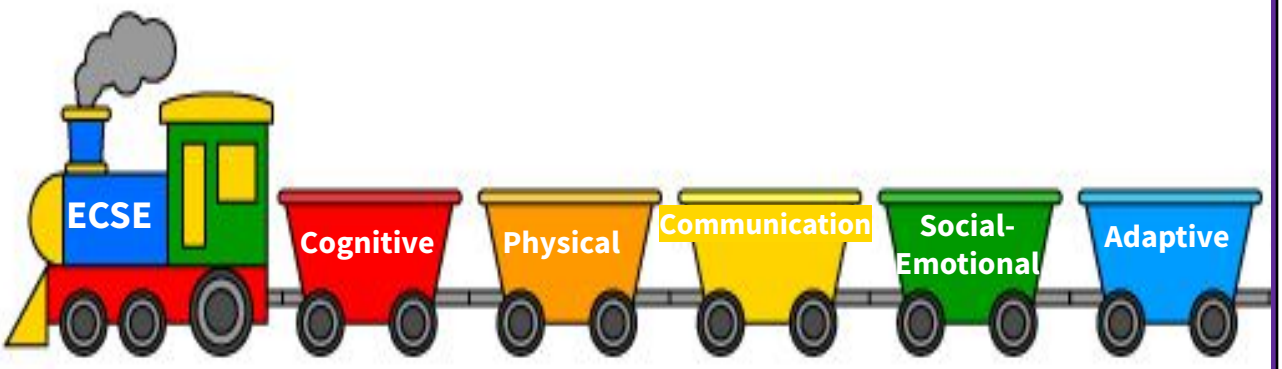
Early Childhood Special Education ECSE

Donna Casavant
RSU 5 ECSE Assistant Director
October 21, 2026

Developmental Domains: The work of preschoolers



Glossary of terms

Acuity	RSU 5 Special Education Data System	**IEP**	Individualized Education Plan
CDC	Centers for Disease Control	**MOU**	Memorandum of Understanding
CINC	CDS Data System	**OT**	Occupational Therapy
DOE	Department of Education	**Power School**	RSU 5 Student Information System
DHHS	Department of Health and Human Services	**PT**	Physical Therapy
ECSE	Early Childhood Special Education	**Part B**	Special Education, 3-22
EI	Early Intervention	**Part C**	Early Intervention, B-2:11
EI4ME	Early Intervention, Maine	**PreK**	Year before Kindergarten
EnGiNE	DOE info sharing platform	**Quality** ⭐⭐⭐	Maine Day Care rating
ESY	Extended School Year	**SDI**	Specially Designed Instruction
FAPE	Free Appropriate Public Education	**SLP**	Speech Language Pathologist

CDC Developmental Milestones

- Tracker NOT Screener
- Guide NOT Evaluate
- 2004 → 2022 Changes



CDC Developmental Milestones Changes



Average

50%

2004

"Wait and see"

Identify concerns

75%

2022

Flag for intervention

RSU 5
ECSE Timeline



Marking development

- **09/22:** EI Team
- **10/25:** ECE Task Force
- **06/26:** ECSE Ass't Director
- **08/26:** FAPE for 4yo
- **08/26:** PreK ECSE classroom
- **09/26:** 3yo Task Force
- **09/27:** FAPE for 3yo

Summer efforts



EI Team (as CDS contractors)
With ECSE Ass't Director

- IEPs
- Direct service ESY
- Welcome and support new Special Educator
- ECSE Classroom set-up

Summer efforts



ECSE Director

- CDS connections
- Cohorts 1-3 connections
- EnGiNE
- CINC records
- IEPs
- Referrals follow up
- Hiring
- Acuity/PowerSchool

Early Fall Efforts



EI/ECSE Team

- Support students
- Support teachers
- Transition meetings
- Referral follow ups
- Teacher/Ed Techs team
- Acuity
- Child Count

Current Student Counts

All numbers represent 4yo in program

- **Total: 28**
- **Referrals: 3**
- **ECSE class: 5**
- **Out of district: 2**
- **PreK classes: 18**

Four-Year-Old ECSE Student Summaries:

% Comparisons

RSU5 PreK: 21%
RSU5 K-12: 18%
Maine: 20%
US: 15%

School	TOTAL	ECSE SpEd	%SpEd
PES	13	1	7.7
MSS	63	19	30.2
DCS	45	5	11.1
District	121	25	20.7

Four-Year-Old ECSE Student Summaries:

By

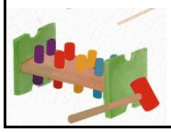
- Disability category
- % in category

Disability Category	Totals	% of total criteria
Speech Language	11	44
Developmental Delay	6	24
Autism	4	16
Multiple Disability	2	8
Emotional Disturbance	1	4
Other Health Impaired	1	4



Three-Year-Old Task Force

- 09/02/2026
- 09/16/2026
- 09/30/2026





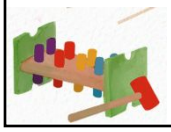
- 19 members
  - Town Council Members
  - Select Board Members
  - School Board Members
  - District Administrators
  - Day Care Representatives
  - Parents
  - Staff
- New and returning members





Three-Year-Old Task Force

Key takeaways





- C to B transition: EI4ME to ECSE
- Mixed delivery model
- Daycares and ⭐⭐⭐ quality stars
- Extended EI4ME
- Rolling admission



Positives: Summary Takeaway

The district appears **well positioned** to **expand** early intervention with many of the **people, programs, partnerships, infrastructure**, and **experience** needed to create a **strong and sustainable model** for early learners.



Negatives: Summary Takeaway

The opportunity is significant, but moving forward will require **careful planning** around **financial sustainability, transportation, space, staffing, childcare partnerships, age-appropriate services,** and the **eventual scale and direction** of the program.



Interesting: Summary Takeaway

The district is facing a **complex set of decisions**, but the **mandate** could provide **an opportunity to rethink and strengthen** the early-childhood system for the **long term**. The immediate priorities are to understand the **population** being served, determine the most **sustainable service model**, assess **staffing** and **financial capacity**, learn from **other districts**, and establish clear **measures of effectiveness.**



5:50-6:15

Service Delivery Models: 2025 edition

ALL IN Center Based Model	PART IN/ PART OUT Mixed Delivery Model	ALL OUT Itinerant Based Model
• **FAPE** contingent on enrollment • Specialized **transportation** (in the IEP) • **Existing services (EIT)** • **New Services** -Special Ed Classroom -Hires -Contracts for services unmet need	• **FAPE NOT contingent on enrollment** • Specialized transportation (in the IEP and for Itinerants) • **Existing services (EIT)** • **New Service** -Special Ed Classroom -Hires -Contracts for services unmet need • Itinerants in community	• **FAPE NOT contingent on enrollment** • Transportation (Students and Itinerants) • **Existing services (EIT)** • **New Services** - No SpEd Classroom Staff -Hires -Contracts for services unmet need • **Increased Providers** • Itinerants in community



Mixed Delivery Model: Short term viable option

School and Community Based with access to Special Education Classroom

- FAPE NOT contingent on enrollment
- Transportation
- In school + Community
- New hires?
- Contracts/MOUs

Summary of Aspirations: A Comprehensive Early Childhood and Community Support System

1. Early, Accessible, and Integrated Services
2. Stronger Partnerships and Community Collaboration
3. A Connected Learning and Workforce Development Pipeline
4. Sustainable Funding and Resource Development
5. Efficient, High-Quality, Data-Informed Services
6. A Deliberate, Sustainable Approach to Growth

(AI Summary)

3-year-old Task Force wraps up

For more information, access on the RSU 5 website:

3yo Task Force Aspirations Summary

Current services being met by

- ECSE Ass't Director
- 2 Special Educators
- 2 ECSE Classroom Ed Techs
- 1.5 Resource Ed Techs (in process)
- 1 Speech Language Pathologist
- 1 Occupational Therapist

Shared or Contracting

- Physical Therapist (PT)
- BCBA
- Psychologist
- Other as needed

2027-28 projections?

- 4-year-olds easier to predict
- 3-year-olds more complex due to multiple considerations

(as of 10-11-2026) 4-year-olds

- **B 27-28 4yo (CDS) 13 +/-4**
- **Other 4s via Child Find +?**
  - **PreK Screenings +?**
- **Summer service needs +?**

(cf 20 projected 2025, 28 actual 2026)

(as of 09/14/2026) 3-year-olds

- **EI4ME 2:9 6+**
- **Opt out? -?**
- **Extended EI4ME ?**
- **Eligibility (C to B) ?**

Changing 3-year-old landscape

- Maine remains alone (2000)
- District 3yo IEPs – less recalibration
- 2:6 – 2:9 – 3:0 timeline
- Opt Out vs Opt IN
- Child count clarity: student information system





Changing 3-year-old landscape

- Extended EI4ME
  - Parent choice (50% historically)
  - 13 states using Extended EI
  - Choice is one way – cannot revert





ECSE Next Steps

- Community partnerships
  - Day care providers
  - Pediatricians
- MOUs
- Cohort communications
- Collaborations possibilities
- EI4ME communications

Considerations beyond this year

Maintain above and what comes next?
Meet mandate and/or grow beyond
Unpredictability at granular level
Systems and Sustainability results

- Special educator needs
- OT/SLP needs
- Shift to more case management/consultation
- Unmet needs through contracting

"The art of early childhood education is in observing, documenting and guiding the learning that takes place when we follow the children's lead."

(Tara Williams, Executive Director
Maine Association for the Education of Young Children
Bangor Daily News, 02- 18-2022)



Thank you

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