



MAINE DEPARTMENT
OF EDUCATION

Cohort 1-4

February 11, 2026

Presented by: The Maine DOE's Commissioner's Office and
the Office of Special Services & Inclusive Education



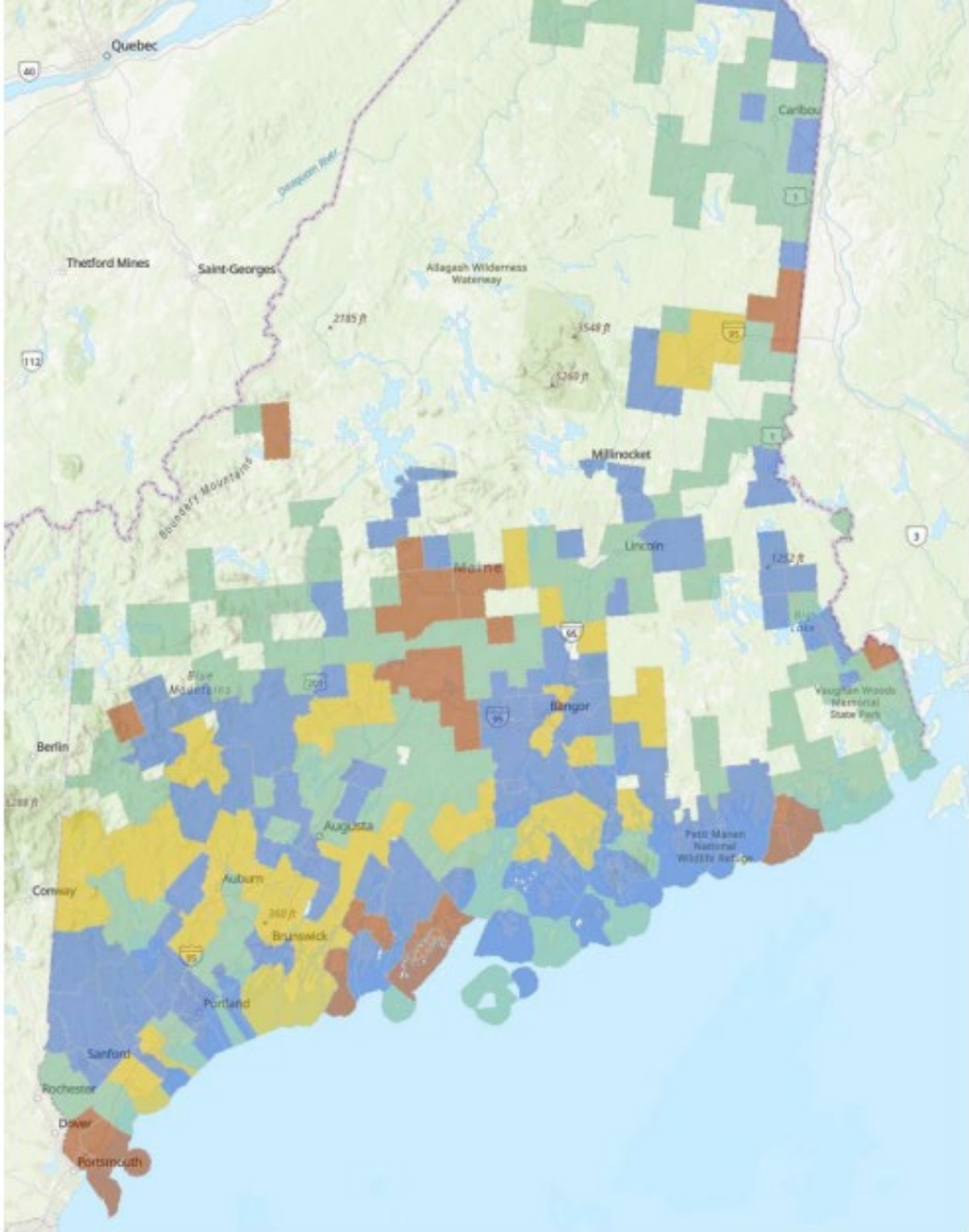


February 11th Agenda

| <u>Agenda Item</u> | <u>Time</u> | <u>Name</u> |
|-------------------------------------|-------------|-----------------------------------|
| Welcome | 5 | Megan Welter |
| New Webpage Walk Through | 10 | Suzie Perry and Julie Giaccone |
| Professional Development Plan 25-26 | 5 | Sandy Flacke |
| Summer Opportunities | 5 | Sandy Flacke |
| Professional Development Plan 26-27 | 5 | Sandy Flacke |
| CDS Support and Service Hub | 5 | Dan Hemdal |
| CDS Preschool Programs | 5 | Heather Henderson |
| Early Learning Team Opportunity | 5 | Michelle Belanger and Sue Gallant |
| Q & A | | |

Welcome to Cohorts 1-4

Cohorts 1-4 List



| CDS Ardenwood | | CDS Downeast | | CDS First Step | | CDS Midcoast | | CDS Opportunity | | CDS PEDS | | CDS Reach | | CDS Twin Rivers | | CDS York | |
|---------------|------------|--------------|------------|----------------|------------|--------------|------------|-----------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|-----------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Category 1 | Category 2 | Category 1 | Category 2 | Category 1 | Category 2 | Category 1 | Category 2 | Category 1 | Category 2 | Category 1 | Category 2 | Category 1 | Category 2 | Category 1 | Category 2 | Category 1 | Category 2 |
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Early Childhood Special Education Webpage

ECSE Webpage

Home / Office / Educators / Learning / Initiatives / Career/Recruitment / Data/Funding

Home → Office of Special Services & Inclusive Education → Cohort 1 Fiscal and Data Information and Resources → Early Childhood Special Education Resources and Tools → Early Childhood Special Education Resources and Tools

| |
|---|
| Special Services Home |
| Child Development Services (CDS) |
| Early Childhood Special Education |
| Early Intervention for ME |
| Effective Dispute Resolution |
| Funding & Fiscal Accountability |
| IDEA Data & Public Reporting |
| IDEA Supervision, Monitoring, & Support |
| Laws & Regulations |
| Professional Learning |
| Resources for Families & |

Early Childhood Special Education Resources and Tools

Programmatic Tools and Resources to Support Preschool Children with Disabilities in the Mixed Delivery System

- Special Educator Certification, Licensure, Endorsements
- General Education Teacher Certification and Qualification Requirements in Inclusive Settings
- Roles and Responsibilities of Early Childhood Special Education Practitioners
- Practitioner Recruitment and Retention
- Child Find in Early Childhood
- The Child Outcomes Summary (COS) Process



ECSE Spring 26 Professional Development

February 25th :Student Support

March 11th: Itinerant Services

March 25th: EnGiNE

April 8th: Data

May 6th: Transition to K, ESY and
LRE

May 20th: Celebration, Summer
Schedule, C to B

Summer Opportunities

- **Monthly meetings to support onboarding for Cohort 3 & 4**
 - **Open Office Hours June, July, August**
 - **ECSE Team support**
-





Technical Assistance 26-27

Monthly meetings to support onboarding

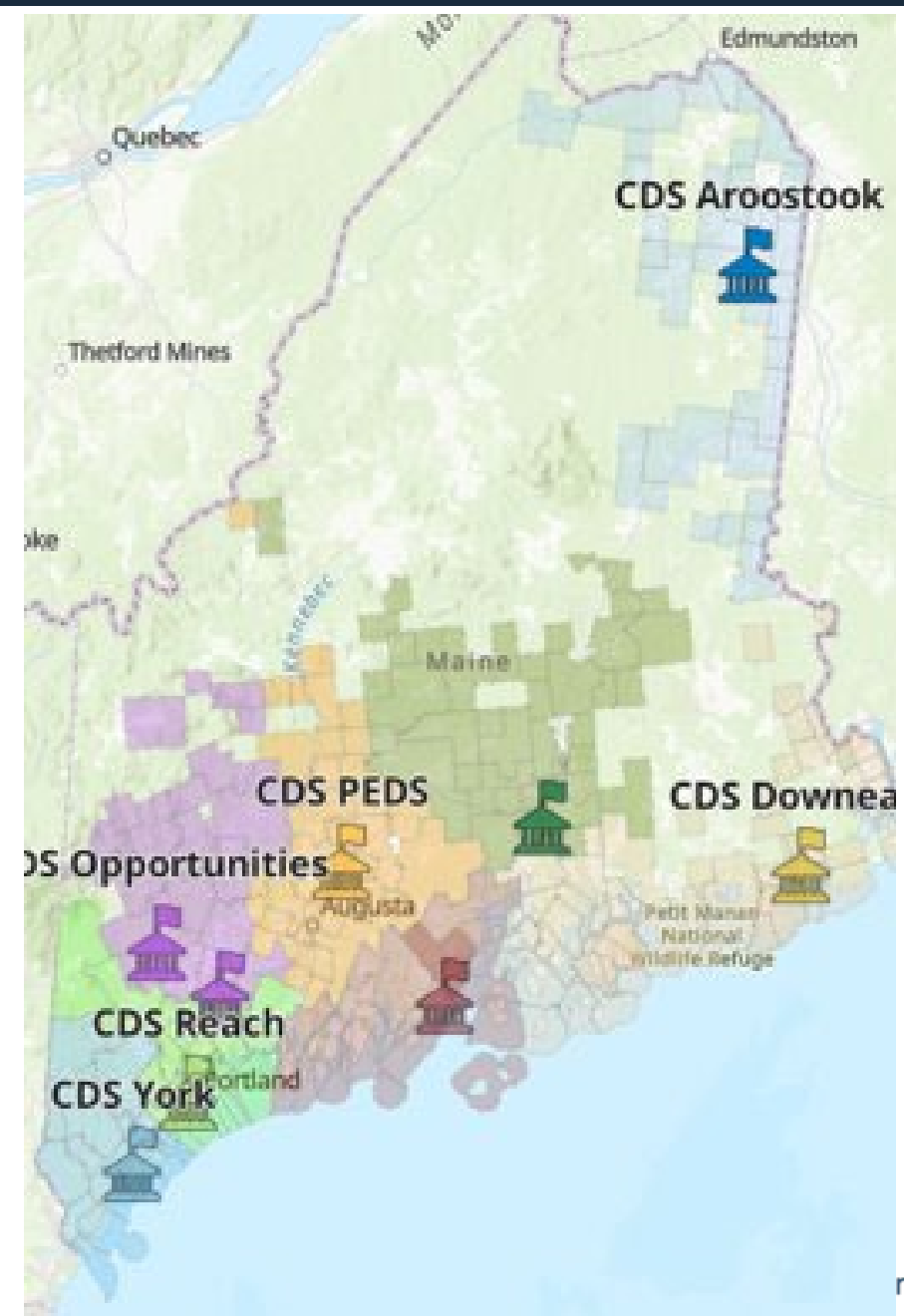
Monthly open office hours

Quarterly Professional Learning Committees

- Superintendents
- Special Education Directors
- ECSE Staff
- Pre-K teachers
- Business Managers
- Data teams
- Large SAU's
- Small SAU's

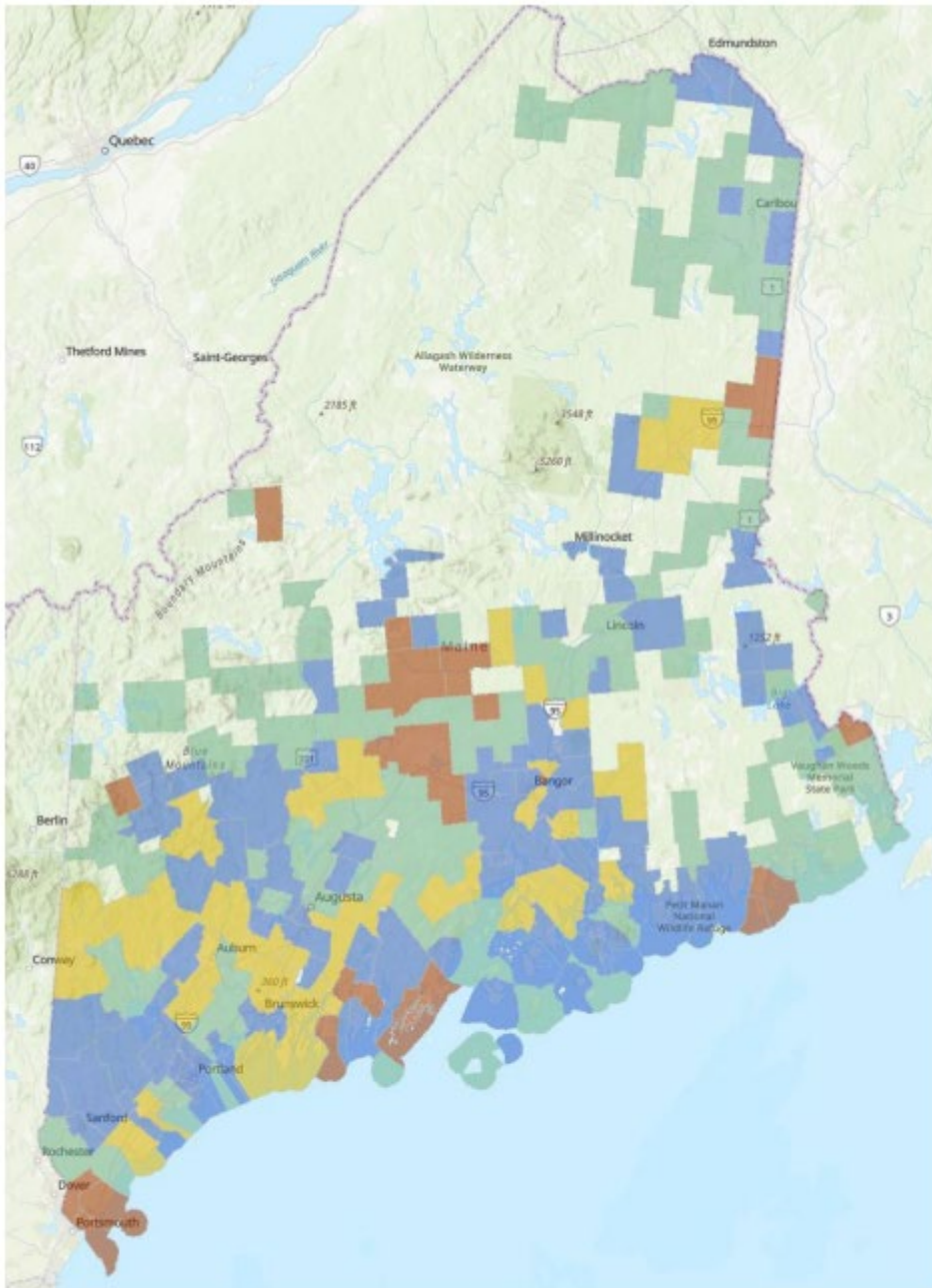
Realignment of CDS Sites

- Realignment of CDS sites and staff occurred 8/11/2025.
- Along with realigning the sites regions, we shifted positions between sites to:
 - Address systemic shortages of staff
 - Ensure that sites have capacity to fulfill the obligation of FAPE
 - Serve in a service and support hub role



CDS Sites to CDS Support & Service Hubs

- During the ECSE FAPE Transition, CDS Sites have continued to operate as they have (FAPE) for children in the towns and municipalities of non-Cohort schools.
- CDS has concurrently partnered with Cohort 1 and Cohort 2 SAUs in a Support and Service hub capacity, dependent on each SAU's MOU
- CDS is currently analyzing how the child count will be impacted by Cohort 3 and 4 schools
 - Assess capacity to ensure that CDS continues fulfilling their FAPE responsibility as well as ensure CDS can support Cohort SAUs through a Support and Service Hub model.



CDS Service and Support Hubs

- MOUs are developed with each Cohort SAU.
 - Detail Service and Supports
 - Monthly Meeting
 - Individualized for Each SAU
- **Service and Support Hub Services**
 - Preschool Programming
 - CDS classrooms in Cohort SAUs
 - Related Services
 - Speech, OT, PT, etc.
 - Itinerant 282B Services
 - SDI and Consultation
 - Case Management
 - Referrals, IEPs, WN, etc.
 - Professional Development



Inside CDS Preschools

2026

Special Purpose Preschools



CDS Preschools: High-Quality Early Learning for Children with Diverse Needs

At CDS Preschools, we provide specialized, nurturing, and developmentally appropriate early childhood education in locations across the state for children ages 3 to 5 with developmental delays and disabilities.

Our special purpose program blends individualized support and high-quality instruction to help every child learn, grow, and thrive.

CDS Preschools function as its own “site” within CDS, separate from the 9 regional CDS sites.



Individualized, High-Quality Instruction

- Each child's unique strengths and needs guide our approach. We offer:
 - Specially designed instruction delivered in both individual and small-group settings
 - Implementation of each child's Individualized Education Program (IEP)
 - Childcare-licensed classrooms that provide a safe, structured, and engaging early learning environment
- Our goal is to ensure every child receives the support they need within a high-quality, developmentally appropriate preschool setting.





History and Growth

- The concept of a preschool program under Child Development Services began during the pandemic when many preschools and daycares closed and there were many children on waitlists through CDS regional sites for special education programming.
- The first CDS preschool was opened in 2021 in Saco and over the years additional preschool programs have evolved and been added to meet these needs.
- Currently, we operate 8 preschool sites across the state of Maine.

109

CDS Preschools

As of February 11, 2026, the CDS Preschools currently serve 109 students across 8 preschool sites.

The CDS Preschools are open 5 days/week, with options for 3- and 6-hour sessions.



Preschool Sites

- **CDS Little Explorers Preschool** (Auburn – Collaboration with Auburn School Department)
- **CDS Circle of Learning Preschool** (Gray)
- **CDS Children’s Journey Preschool** (Arundel)
- **CDS Discovery Cove Preschool** (Biddeford)
- **CDS Forest Friends Preschool** (Mexico – Collaboration with RSU 10)
- **CDS Moose Meadows Preschool** (Oxford – Collaboration with MSAD 17)
- **CDS Stepping Stones Preschool** (Brewer)
- **CDS Owls Nest Preschool** (Turner – Collaboration with MSAD 52)





Interested in Collaboration?

SAU/Preschool Collaboration

CDS Preschools are currently collaborating with several SAUs to provide preschool special education programming for their districts. These collaborations are guided by a commitment to maintaining the child's Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) and maximizing access to general education. When appropriate, services are provided within the regular education setting, and opportunities for inclusion are consistently explored and supported.

What Does Collaboration Look Like?

| | | |
|--|--|---|
| Full staffing and programming provided through CDS Preschools at a site in your district | Options for shared staffing at a site in your district | Supervision of staff/programming provided by CDS Preschools |
| Related Services | Case Management | Opportunities and desire for inclusion with SAU's |
| High quality, evidence-based programming | Highly trained staff | Additional opportunities may be available upon request! |



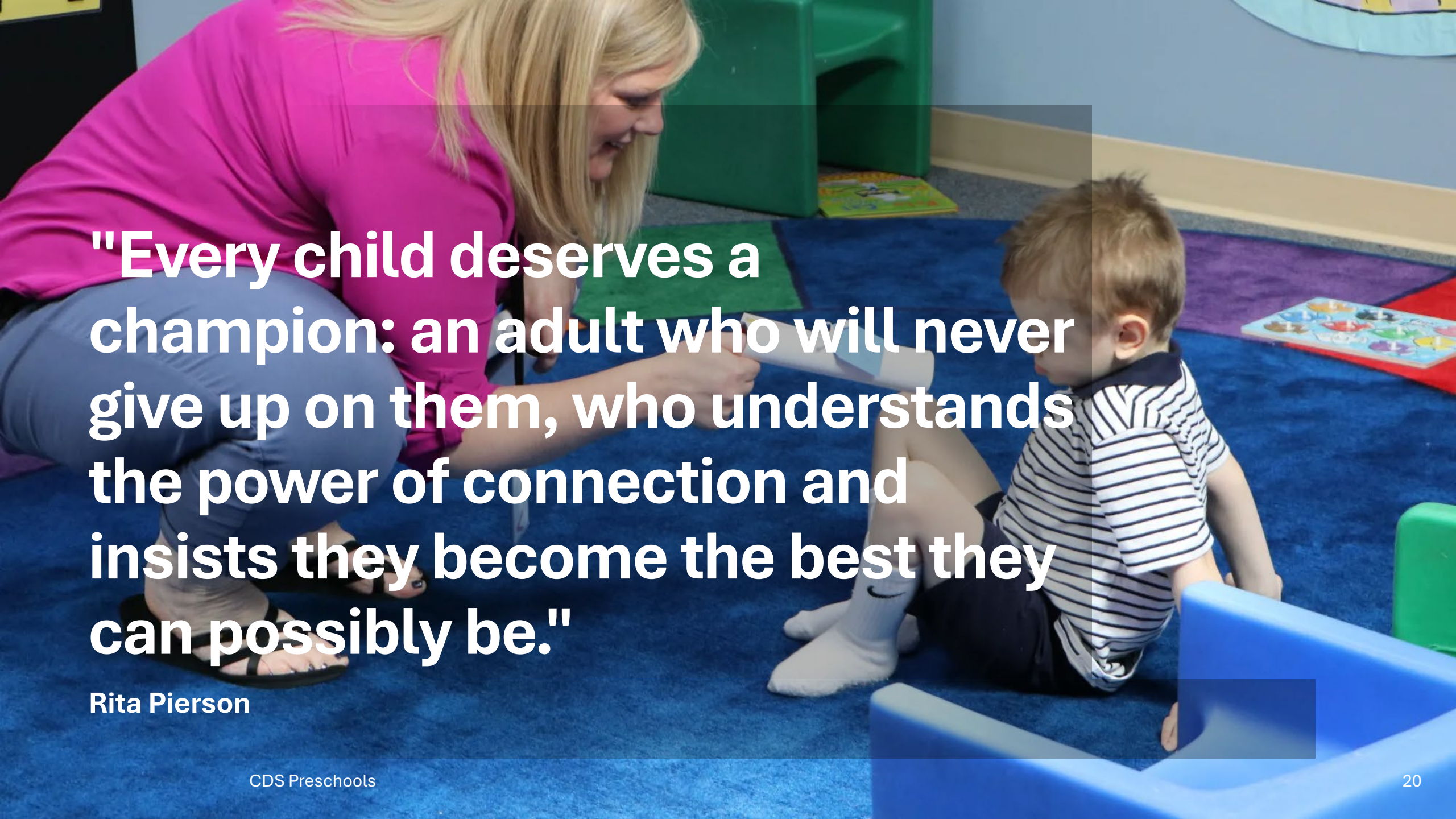
A Supportive, Diverse Environment

At CDS Preschools, we cherish every child's participation, progress, and individuality. We maintain:

- Low teacher-to-child ratios based on unique needs
- Access to behavioral consultation and services (BCBA services) when needed
- A commitment that no child will ever be suspended or disenrolled due to behavior

If a child requires a more specialized setting, the IEP team will guide next steps, ensuring continuity and support throughout the process.





"Every child deserves a champion: an adult who will never give up on them, who understands the power of connection and insists they become the best they can possibly be."

Rita Pierson

Highly Qualified & Caring Professionals

Our staff are:

- **Credentialed through the Maine Department of Education**
- **Certified special education teachers, related service providers and educational technicians**
- **Fully vetted with criminal history background checks through the Department of Education and Department of Health and Human Services**

Our educators bring expertise, compassion, and a commitment to helping every child reach their fullest potential.



Success stories from families

- **"We are so proud of the growth he has made since starting at Circle of Learning, his ability to talk and work through social settings has changed so much and it's been such an improvement"**
- "It is hard to find the words to express how important you are to our granddaughter finding her voice and place in this challenging world. When you stepped into her life, it was as if a great weight was lifted as we saw how you were patiently guiding her forward, despite her best effort to fight you. You can see that she loves and trusts you and we have seen so much progress."
- **"I have nothing but appreciation for the COL staff, our son is now imitating words and actions, he has made friends and he now waves and says bye-bye"**
- "He has gained a lot of confidence throughout his time at COL, he's happy, silly and social he has truly blossomed"
- **"Thanks for the meeting this morning. You guys are AMAZING and I know will be a tough act to follow... fingers crossed his next preschool teachers and OT's are as great as you guys are, but they will certainly have some BIG shoes to fill! :)"**
- "Kuddos also to Heather, Sarah and ALL of the ed tech's/teachers that have worked with [child] at Children's Journey this year. You all have been the ultimate source of calm and reassurance in this difficult and informative time for us and [child]. Where do I write my full yelp review?? Seriously though we'd love to sing your praises to whoever will listen."
- **"Just wanted to thank you and ALL the staff at CDS. Everyone has been amazing and this has been the best experience for [child] and myself. I am truly grateful for the kindness, compassion and going above and beyond for my child's needs. I am so sad that our journey at CDS is coming to an end!"**
- "Thank you for everything you've done at CDS for [child] and our family this year. This year at school has made a huge difference in [child's] ability to play, communicate, and get used to the structure and fun of school. I know that he's prepared for his next school year and that he will have a positive approach going in."



Excellence Recognized

CDS Preschools are proud to be a **Level 4 Rising Stars-rated** program—reflecting our dedication to quality, professional standards, and developmentally appropriate practices that support all children.



RISING STARS FOR ME
Maine's Quality Rating and Improvement System

CDS Preschools Team



Heather Henderson
Director of
Preschool
Programming



Jessica Richard
Preschool
Operations
Manager



Sarah Taylor
Preschool Program
Manager



Julie Gardner
Preschool Program
Manager



Telicia Souliere
Preschool Program
Manager



THANK YOU!



THANK YOU, ALL!



Preschools Contact Information

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Early Learning Team Highlight



Questions?



Stay Connected!

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