

Top 10 Questions  
We're Hearing About  
the ECSE Transition

STARRING

MAINE  
DEPARTMENT OF  
EDUCATION

TONIGHT'S  
LINE-UP

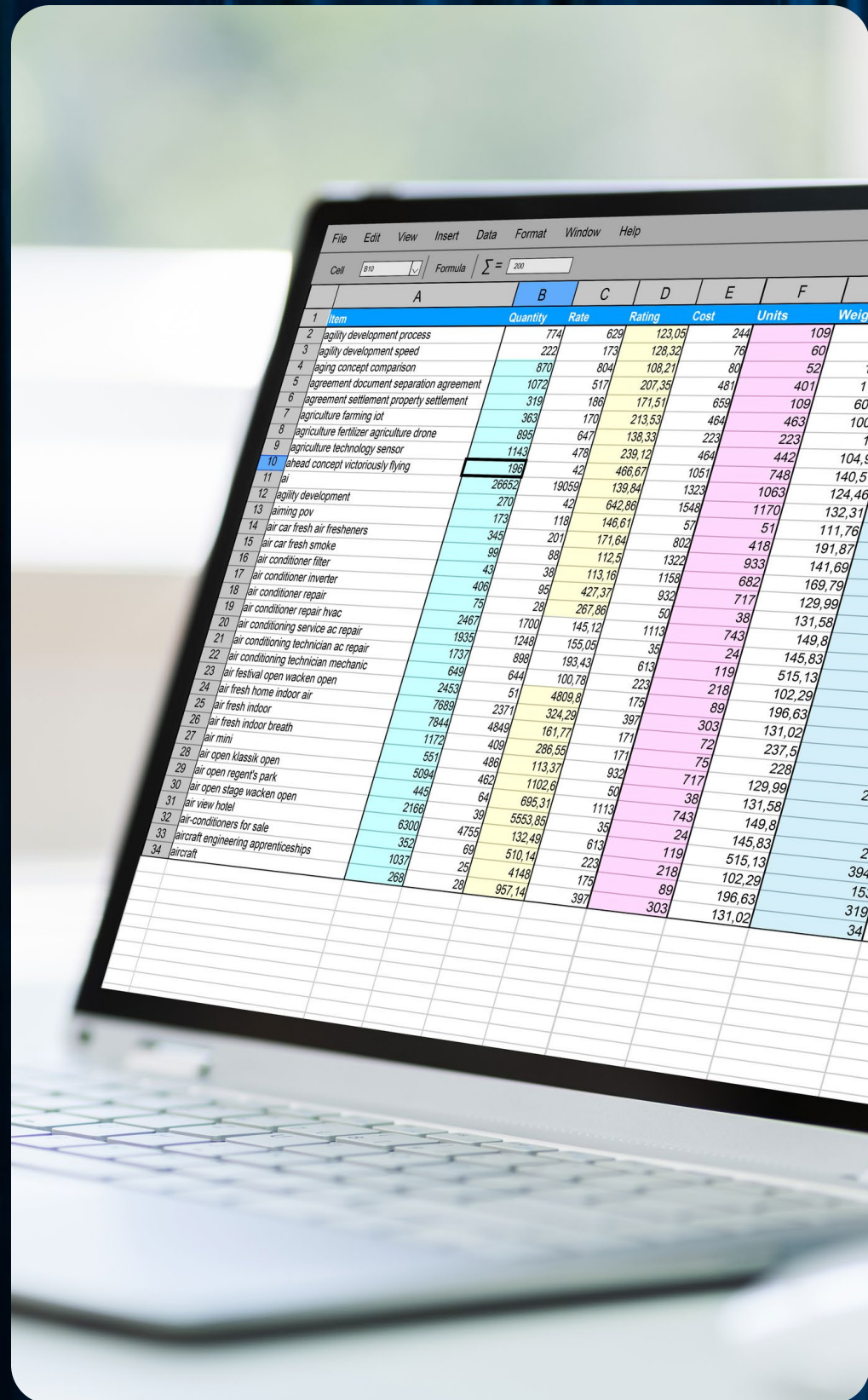
CELEBRITY GUESTS:  
MEMBERS FROM THE  
OSSIE TEAM

CELEBRITY GUESTS:  
MEMBERS FROM THE  
EARLY LEARNING TEAM

CELEBRITY GUESTS:  
MEMBERS FROM CHILD  
DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

———— NUMBER 10 ————

WAIT... WHO ACTUALLY  
PAYS FOR THIS?



# SPECIAL GUEST: BARBARA MCGOWAN

The ECSE funding structure provides 100% state-funded support for eligible children ages 3–5 with IEPs, outside of the EPS formula.

While specific costs vary based on placement, service delivery, transportation, and applicable thresholds, there is no local share requirement.

All expenditures must meet the standard of being reasonable and necessary to implement the IEP and ensure the provision of FAPE.

NUMBER 9

WHAT IF WE DON'T HAVE  
ENOUGH  
PRE-K SEATS?



## SPECIAL GUEST: TRISHA KURT

When school-based capacity is limited, SAUs may need to consider additional options to ensure all eligible children have access to FAPE.

This often includes a mixed delivery approach, incorporating both school-based and community-based settings aligned with IEP needs and LRE.

SAUs maintain local control over program design but must ensure that sufficient options are available to meet student needs and capacity.

———— NUMBER 8 ————

CAN A CHILD STAY IN  
PRESCHOOL FOR AN  
EXTRA YEAR?

**SPECIAL GUEST:**  
**ERIN FRAZIER**

Yes, but only under certain conditions:

**Condition 1:**The SAU receives children from CDS that are eligible for an extra year of preschool under the following eligibility criteria:

- Children meet the statutory age window (July–October 15)
- Have an active IEP prior to December 1 of the preceding year
- Are in the SAU's first year of assuming FAPE responsibility under the transition

The determination must be made by the IEP Team, based on whether continuation in ECSE best meets the child's individual needs.

**Condition 2:**The SAU has a retention policy that would allow children an extra year of preschool.*This is not an application of 676.*

\*note: children that are kindergarten eligible are not able to receive 100% funding for their special education costs through the ECSE fund



NUMBER 7

DO WE HAVE TO PROVIDE  
TRANSPORTATION?



## SPECIAL GUEST JENNIFER AUSTIN

Transportation must be provided only when the IEP Team determines it is necessary for the child to access FAPE.

As a related service, transportation:

- Is individually determined based on the child's disability-related needs
- Must be documented in the IEP when required
- Is not automatically included and should not be treated as a default service

Decisions should be grounded in whether transportation is needed for the child to access and benefit from their educational program.

NUMBER 6

HOW MANY HOURS OF  
PRESCHOOL DO WE  
ACTUALLY NEED TO  
PROVIDE?



## SPECIAL GUEST: Jackie Hersom

Educational Setting (Placement in LRE)  
Determined by the IEP Team based on the child's needs

Must include access to general education as part of FAPE

- For preschool-aged children in Maine:
  - Includes participation in a Pre-K or early childhood program
  - Minimum general education access guidance:
    - 6 hours/week (3-year-olds)
    - 10 hours/week (4-year-olds)

Important distinction:

General education hours are not IEP services—they are part of the placement where the IEP is implemented

NUMBER 5

CAN WE JUST PROVIDE  
SERVICES INSTEAD OF A  
FULL PRESCHOOL  
PLACEMENT?



## SPECIAL GUEST: Julie Giaccone

In some cases, yes—but not as a default approach.

The IEP Team is required to consider FAPE in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE), including access to general education settings with nondisabled peers, as part of every placement decision.

A “services-only” model is appropriate only when the IEP Team determines, based on the child’s individual needs, that participation in a general education setting is not necessary for the provision of FAPE.

NUMBER 4

DO WE HAVE TO COUNT  
CHILDREN WITH  
DISABILITIES IN OUR PRE-K  
CLASSROOM RATIO?

## SPECIAL GUEST: NICOLE MADORE



Answer: Yes

Inclusion in classroom ratios depends on the child's level of participation in the classroom setting:

- Children who attend the Pre-K classroom for more than 50% of the time are considered enrolled and must be included in the classroom ratio.
- Children who attend less than 50% of the time with adult support are not included in the ratio.

This determination should be based on both the amount of time the child participates in the classroom and whether the child is accessing the setting independently or with dedicated adult support.

NUMBER 3

WHAT EXACTLY IS THE ROLE  
OF CDS NOW—AND HOW IS  
THE SERVICE & HUB  
SUPPOSED TO SUPPORT US?



## SPECIAL GUEST: AMY BRAGG

Statute directs CDS to transition into a support and service hub role

This support is intended to assist SAUs but is not mandated

SAUs retain full responsibility for FAPE and program decisions

Continued improvements are being made based on feedback from the field

NUMBER 2

HOW ARE WE SUPPOSED  
TO BUILD A BUDGET  
WHEN WE DON'T KNOW  
WHAT THIS WILL LOOK  
LIKE?



## SPECIAL GUEST: BARBARA MCGOWAN ON BUDGETS

While exact numbers may be uncertain, budgets can be developed using a structured, student-centered approach:

- Begin with projected student need and service models
- Align staffing and services to IEP-driven requirements
- Plan for flexibility, with adjustments based on quarterly data
- Ensure all expenditures are reasonable and necessary

This approach supports responsible planning while allowing for refinement as actual enrollment and needs become clearer.

NUMBER 2

WE'RE COMFORTABLE WITH  
FOUR-YEAR-OLDS—HOW DO  
WE SUPPORT THREE-YEAR-  
OLDS?



## SPECIAL GUEST: Nicole Madore

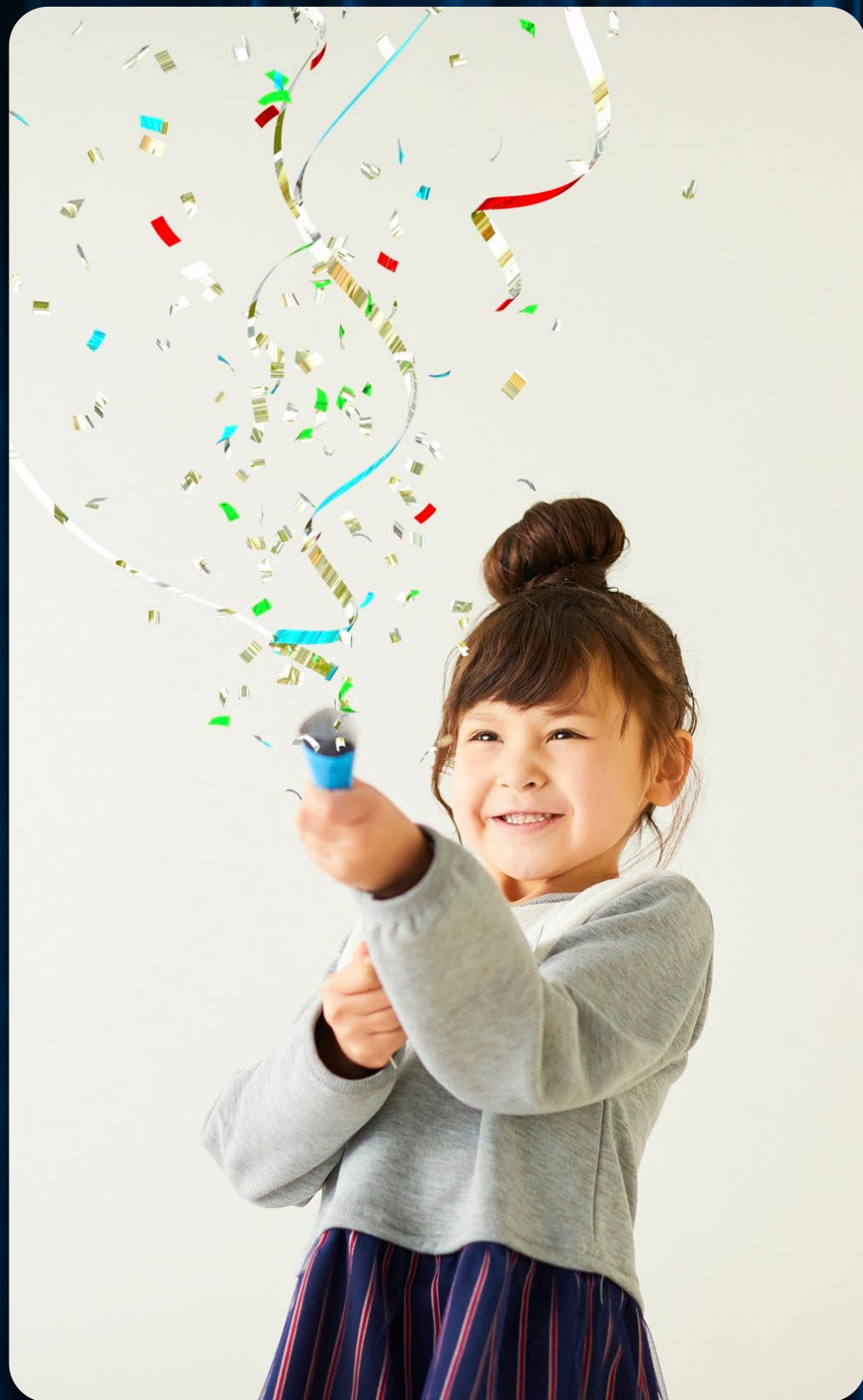
The requirement remains consistent: SAUs must ensure FAPE in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) for three-year-olds, just as they do for four-year-olds. To do so, SAUs should:

- Evaluate internal capacity, including staffing, program models, and available settings
- Consider mixed delivery approaches, including partnerships with community-based programs
- Ensure access to general education environments with nondisabled peers, as appropriate
- Provide developmentally appropriate curriculum, materials, and learning environments that reflect the needs of three-year-old learners

The minimum FAPE offer is 6 hours per week for three-year-olds; however, all decisions must be individualized based on the child's IEP.

NUMBER 1

IS THIS GOING TO GET  
EASIER?



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## SPECIAL GUEST:

Sandy Flacke

Yes—you've got this. And we're in it with you.

This gets easier when we:

- Build from a shared understanding
- Stay grounded in FAPE in the Least Restrictive Environment
- Keep learning, adjusting, and improving together

At the end of the day, this work is about access—making sure children with disabilities can get the services and programming they need.

We see the work happening across SAUs, CDS, and the Department.

It matters. And we're building this together.



THANK YOU



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