**Preschool Promise**

Less than 40% of preschool children in Jackson and Josephine counties are currently enrolled in early education programs. This alarming statistic is changing, with an exciting statewide program called Preschool Promise which began in September 2016.

In 2015 Oregon Governor Kate Brown signed HB 3380, allocating $27 million to increase the number of quality preschool programs throughout the state. Southern Oregon Early Learning Services (SOELS) is one of six Early Learning Hubs chosen to receive funds for this exciting project. One hundred and seventy children in Jackson and Josephine counties who are three and four years of age will be offered quality preschool, free of charge. Children selected will be from families whose incomes are below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level. Those families will be able to choose from an array of preschools in which to enroll their children. Preschool Promise will permit families to choose the type of model they prefer, whether it is in an elementary school, a children’s Relief Nursery, family child care home, community preschool or another model. SOELS Preschool Promise programs are planned for communities stretching from Wolf Creek to Phoenix.

**Preschool experiences help children develop a wide range of skills in language, literacy, mathematics, as well as emotional and social competencies, all of which contribute to success in school.**

With an investment of this size, you might ask, “Why is preschool so important? Why did the need for preschool capture the attention of the Oregon Legislature and ultimately initiate this large project?” A child’s experiences during their early years shape the developing nature of the brain’s architecture. Preschool experiences help children develop a wide range of skills in language, literacy, mathematics, as well as emotional and social competencies, all of which contribute to future success later in school. Strong evidence supports the value of one or two years of developmentally appropriate, high quality preschool education.

SOELS is grateful for this support of children in the region. Preschool Promise will help make an important contribution to a child’s future success, both in school and in life. As implementation plans begin to take shape, we look forward to enrolling children for a year-long time of growth and learning.

**Preschool Promise** is a free preschool program for eligible families. Eligibility and enrollment for Preschool Promise is coordinated by early learning hubs across the state.