

Oregon Pre-K Expansion, Opens Door For New Eugene Pre-School



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By Paris Jackson

EUGENE, Ore--Struggling families in Lane County now have a new resource available to them. Head Start of Lane County recently opened a new pre-school facility, the Fairfield Head Start Center.

Head Start of Lane County's Executive Director Annie Soto said its new \$700,000 facility was made possible through a collaborative effort.

The Head Start center opened its doors in late September. Currently, it serves 36 low-income children. Soto credits Governor Ted Kulongoski's Pre-Kindergarten Expansion Program for making the facility possible. Experts say early childhood education makes a huge difference in a child's development.

"The brain research shows that its really important that the most learning happens before children enter kindergarten. We really believe that, and we hear for kindergarten teachers that children who are in a Head Start program truly are ready to learn," said Soto.

Soto said they're thankful that the Bethel School District allowed them to put their Head Start facility on Fairfield Elementary School property.

Soto said they have room for 36 more children, however, they're waiting on additional funding. According to the Oregon Department of Education, Lane County only serves 70% of qualified Head Start children.