



Port Orford's Ready, Set, Learn

Ready, Set, Learn is a locally created program. Its mission is to increase access to educational opportunities for ALL young students in the Port Orford community.

Ready, Set, Learn (RSL) provides learning experiences to students and families that strengthen their capacity for successful interaction in a K-12 school environment. We provide experiences for parents, families, staff and community members that grow their abilities to support students' involvement and engagement in school. RSL does not teach school curriculum. Instead, we work to provide exposure to experiences that support and strengthen development of the pre-academic cognitive and social skills that K-12 curricula simply assume are already in place.

RSL's program is open to all students in the offered grade range. However, throughout our curriculum selection and development, we pay special attention to the types of learning that children from rural poverty may not yet have had the opportunity to develop.

Starting in 2015, RSL offered a successful summer classroom experience for 10 children entering kindergarten. Pre/post data demonstrated student growth, school staff saw value to students in the fall, and families spoke enthusiastically about the experience. By 2019, the program had grown to provide a month-long summer classroom experience (at no charge to families!) including over 50 children entering K-3rd grades. RSL's classroom work center rotation model, with carefully vetted curriculum, is key to RSL's success. The work center classroom model allows us to target differentiation, it adds structure for children to learn to trust and follow, and it provides bite-size chunks of teaching that are student-friendly and allow our cross-sector teaching staff to grow their teaching skills as well.

In 2020, Covid-19 restrictions turned the program on its head, as RSL was unable to hold an in-person summer class. However, in the way of crises, this one also created a new opportunity for RSL to work more directly with parents -- who had suddenly become primary managers of their children's education.

In 2021, leveraging off the 2020 experience, RSL has launched a new program -- Ready, Set, Parents. Ready, Set, Parents (RSP) provides family-friendly resources and materials directly to parents and caregivers at no charge. Families choose what they want to use, on their schedules, and have support available to them as they do so. As with our summer classroom curriculum, the RSP resources are carefully selected. Much consideration is given to what our data shows us about what students need, and what activities will build families' school-readiness skills and foster positive attitudes about learning.

How do we pay for this?

Ready, Set, Learn started with minimal funding and much volunteer hard work. Volunteer commitment continues to be a significant part of sustaining the program, however, we are incredibly grateful for funding from multiple sources that allows us to pay staff and purchase curriculum/family materials. RSL has funding through 2021 from Meyer Memorial Trust, and has recently obtained funding for the RSP program through The Ford Family Foundation. The South Coast Regional Early Learning Hub is an ongoing supporter of our work. The Port Orford-Langlois

School District is serves as our fiscal sponsor, and also contributes funding as budgets allow. Oregon Coast Community Action / South Coast Head Start provides guidance and in-kind support. We receive in-kind and/or financial support from many community partners such as our local public libraries and Rotary clubs. We are thankful for this broad support, yet, ensuring a sustainable stream of funding going forward is a serious concern and a continuing challenge.

How will RSL's summer classroom look going forward?

The impact of the pandemic on the operation of RSL's future summer programs is not yet fully knowable, but will surely result in adjustments to our classroom model and student numbers in the near term. Beyond that, as community-wide changes are implemented (perhaps preschool as part of the local school system) the role of Ready, Set, Learn will shift as appropriate to support transitions and meet student and family needs.



Why do we do this work?

The Port Orford community is listed as a state of Oregon “poverty hot spot”. US Census data identifies Port Orford School District among the highest poverty districts nationwide, as well as in Oregon. Twenty percent of Port Orford district children are classified as homeless. In addition, the Port Orford community is rural and isolated, creating additional challenges for families to access resources.

Oregon's Kindergarten Assessment data shows that too few of our Kindergarteners arrive at school ready to learn. We believe this stems from a combination of local factors, and while we address several of these factors through our summer classroom experience, others continue to impact students year-round:

- 1) Less than ideally enriching home environments. Typical for a high poverty area, many home environments are stressed and chaotic.
- 2) Parents and caregivers may not themselves have felt successful in school, and may not be comfortable providing support for their children's academic success. They may easily disconnect and de-value the importance of school success in their family.
- 3) Long summer break with lack of opportunities for young children to interact socially outside of the school environment.
- 4) Limited access to pre-school resources for families.
- 5) Local history of a kindergarten year that begins with “no expectations”.