



OREGON STATE SENATE

April 27, 2015

TO: Rep. Doherty, Chair
House Education Committee
FROM: Sen. Mark Hass, District 14
RE: SB 913 Support

Testimony to House Education Committee
SB 321

This legislation lowers the age of entering Oregon public schools from seven to six. The purpose is to combat our notoriously high rate of absenteeism.

Absenteeism is complex. It often involves family health, family finances, drugs and poverty.

The mandatory school age varies across the county. Fifteen states require students to be in school at age seven, 24 require students to be six; and nine require students to be enrolled at age five.

The original bill proposed moving Oregon from age seven to five – but in a compromise amendment there was agreement to make it age six.

Educators, the Department of Education, and Oregon's Education Superintendent all testified in favor of the bill.

The Oregon Home School Network originally opposed it – but then officially said they will stay neutral since it has no effect at all on home school families.

There's no effect on home schooled children and no effect on families who send children to private school.

Simply put, the bill says, if you're going to put your child into Oregon's public school system then you have to do it when that child is six years old. That's all.

How big of a problem is this? The department of education says only a small percentage of kids come in at age seven.



But here's the reality for those kids: Experts say it is incredibly difficult for them to catch up with other kids who already have two years of school under their belt. These students will always be behind. They will always struggle. They are likely to fail.

To me, this is the bottom line; it's better to help give these children a good launch kids at the beginning ... instead of trying to rescue them at the end.

Mark Haas

Some misperceptions exist surrounding lowering the compulsory age:

- European nations enroll their children in elementary school much later than children in Oregon.
- There are no studies that show that starting school at an earlier age serves no long-term benefits.
- Children are not always ready to start school at six years old.

Most students are enrolled by six years of age. **SB 321 has been amended to allow attendance at six years old instead of five years old.**

European Commission on Education and Training (2014/2015)

This 2014/2015 Education and Training report focused on Compulsory Education in Europe and found that in 42 European nations, **66% started school at age six, 40% started at age 5 and under, and only 16% of these nations started children at seven years old.**

Hightscope Perry Preschool Study Through Age 40 (2005)

Randomly divided 123 children born in poverty and at high risk aged three and four years old were placed into a high quality early education program and a comparison group who received no early childhood education program. The children were then interviewed at age 40.

The study found that the adults who were placed in the high quality early education program had:

- Higher earnings
- Were more likely to hold a job
- Had committed fewer crimes
- Were more likely to have graduated from high school than students who did not start their education earlier.

Journal of Speech, Language, and Hearing Research (2014)

Found that children who had been delayed toddler-age language development demonstrated poorer self-regulation and other "soft skills," including social skills and attention functions later in kindergarten. Having access to a diverse group of peers and active teachers provides children with the ability to develop these skills.

European Journal on Psychology and Education (2013)

Examined the relationship between children's motivation at 3 years old and how that affected their academic skills in kindergarten. Some parents are concerned that their child will burn out by starting school at a younger age, but "findings from these studies suggest that motivation is positively linked to academic achievement." Rather than burn out, the motivation that children have at a young age can help their success in school, which continues to motivate them to do well."



99.6% of students in Oregon are enrolled in kindergarten age 6 or younger. The chart below from the Oregon Department of Education shows the breakdown of enrollment.

Kindergarten Students First Enrolled in 2014-15* by Age on September 1, 2014	
Age	Number of Students
4	12
5	20,270
6	20,712
7	86
8	16
Other	22
Total	41,118

Oregon Department of Education

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