

Chair and members of the committee,

I wish to speak today in favor of senate bill 580 regarding caseloads. I have worked in the Salem Keizer School District as a Special Education Instructional Assistant for 12 years. Currently the teacher I work under has a caseload of 50 kids and every week the teachers are turning in 3-8 new referrals. Each referral takes one hour to get ready to request testing and medical statements. Then the (IEP) meeting takes at least one hour. The next step is to enter in all the notes from the meeting, there are over 20 pages that need to be edited. There have been many times when the LRC teacher has had to cancel groups because she is so behind on paperwork. This means that the kids are not being served their time which is a binding legal document.

The IA's have had to come up with our own lesson plans because the teacher does not have time for that. Last year we were asked by classroom teacher to keep some kids in our room more because of behaviors they are having in the classroom. When our special ed teacher said they can't do this without having a meeting, as per the law, the teacher went to the principal who said we need to do what the classroom teacher wanted. This makes our groups over 6 kids, which is not ideal when you are teaching kids with disabilities. Many times, you will have kids at such different levels at the same time.

Why is it that the classroom teachers have around 30 kids but the special ed teachers have double that? The special ed teachers have so much more paperwork to do on each kid than classroom teachers. We need to lower the amount that each special ed teacher has on a caseload. In years past we start the school year with 1 teacher and sometimes if the numbers are high, they give us a part time teacher. But then in January they have taken away the part time teacher. Our numbers jump up because of referrals and at spring break they sometimes give us a different part time teacher. I know my LRC teacher has asked the district many times this year for more help. But they refuse.

In the past, I have been asked if I was interested in going through the process of becoming a special ed teacher. I refuse every time because I see how much work they do on their own time and they do not get paid extra for that. Every weekend this year the teacher I work with takes home several files to work on to be ready for the next week.

Something needs to change! I even had a past teacher that had a mental breakdown because of all the work. The district talks about equity, but this is so far from being equitable.

Thank you for listening to us because we fell no one else will.

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