

Submitter: Nikole Emerson  
On Behalf Of: private citizen and educator  
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Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1596

The 2015-16 school year was the first year the state of Oregon required districts to offer free full-day kindergarten. I had already taught half-day kindergarten for one year at a Title 1 school and was rehired to teach full-day kindergarten thereafter. Fast forward to the 2023-24 school year; my teammates and I were gravely alarmed over the significant increase in student dysregulation and extreme behaviors we were witnessing in our full-day kindergarten classrooms. After consulting with our principal, tier one behavior coach, and district administrators, we decided to visit the pre-kindergarten programs in our district to see what skills our students who had not attended preschool might have failed to learn. Our key takeaway was that in pre-K, there was a little bit of academics and a lot of play. This was in stark contrast to our kindergarten classrooms where, as one of my pithy teammates put it, we had a firehose of academics and a trickle of play. No wonder our students were flaming out! We received permission from our administrators at the building and district level to start making significant changes to our day in order to incorporate more play while still being committed to academic success on district measures. We finished the 2023-24 school year with this shift and have continued to be committed to play in kindergarten.

Having the legal protection to use a play-based learning pedagogy in the elementary classroom is going to empower educators to use developmentally appropriate best practices, and perhaps will even provide the missing link for closing our achievement gap. Please support SB 1596 for our children and their teachers.