

**Chair Frederick, Vice-Chair Weber, and Members of the Senate Committee on Education. Thank you for the opportunity to testify at today's hearing.**

I am Deborah Lowe Vandell, Founding Dean of the School of Education at the University of California, Irvine and the Chancellor's Professor Emerita of Education at UC Irvine. Earlier in my career, I was a kindergarten and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade teacher. For some 50 years now, my research has focused on ways to support children's learning and development in and out of school. I have observed hundreds, if not thousands of classrooms, across the United States over the course of my career.

I am speaking today in support of SB 1596, which would allow play-based learning to be considered as part of the 900 hours of instructional time for students in kindergarten through grade five in Oregon.

From my research and the research of many others, we have learned that many elementary school students spend much of their instructional time in large groups listening to their teachers talk or at their desk doing work sheets. They also spend a lot of time in transitions, lining up and getting ready to move from one place to another. **These activities do not reflect what we know about how children learn best.**

Rather, research has shown that children learn best when they are actively engaged in hands-on activities with their teachers and peers. That is, when they are engaged in play-based learning

Research has demonstrated that engaging in hands-on activities on play-based activities predicts gains in children's academic skills – in reading, in math, and in science –

At the same time, research has shown that play-based learning promotes life skills in communicating with peers and adults as well as skills collaborating with others.

It also has been found to foster a sense of confidence and joy.

A central take-home message from my testimony today is that play-based learning is not a departure from real learning. Instead, it is teaching in the way humans learn.

Incorporating play-based learning as part of the instruction does not reduce or lower academic standards, rather it empowers teachers to support their students' growth in academic skills as well as their students' critical life skills in communication, collaboration, and critical thinking.

Thank you, again, for the opportunity to speak in favor of this important piece of legislation.