

Submitter: Jessica Langsam
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Education
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1596

Written Testimony in Support of Oregon Senate Bill 1596

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2/5/2026

Chair and Members of the Committee,

I am a preschool teacher writing in strong support of Oregon Senate Bill 1596. In my work with young children, I see daily how capable, confident, and intellectually curious they are when learning is grounded in playful inquiry. Too often, as students move into K–5 settings, that confidence and expertise with ideas is replaced by rote, skill-and-drill instruction that prioritizes speed and compliance over thinking.

I have seen play-based inquiry successfully implemented across PreK–5 classrooms in the Beaverton School District. In these classrooms, educators intentionally align playful learning with Oregon state standards while holding high expectations for children’s intellectual work. Playful inquiry gives students sustained access to real ideas and powerful knowledge by allowing them to investigate concepts, test theories, revise thinking, and build understanding over time, rather than simply practice isolated skills.

This matters deeply for students across racial, class, and ability differences. Traditional instructional models often reward students who already have access to academic language, prior knowledge, and narrow ways of demonstrating understanding. Playful inquiry broadens access to knowledge by offering multiple entry points into complex ideas. Children can show understanding through talk, movement, building, drawing, and collaboration, making rigorous learning accessible to students of all racial identities, socioeconomic backgrounds, and learning profiles. This approach does not lower expectations. It expands who is able to meet them.

Educators who intentionally design for and protect playful inquiry nurture children who want to learn, want to innovate, and want to build knowledge together. These students develop confidence as thinkers and see themselves as capable contributors to their learning communities. Senate Bill 1596 supports instructional practices that ensure children are not asked to trade curiosity, identity, or intellectual agency for compliance as they move through elementary school.

Thank you for your time and consideration.
Jessica Langsam