

Dear Chair Frederick, Vice Chair Weber, and members of the Senate Education Committee,

I am writing in support of SB 1596 to allow play-based instruction to be counted as part of instructional minutes.

For over 20 years, educators have been studying the impact of play-based learning on young students' learning, spanning the range from standard academic skills to the more recently valued social emotional skills that allow students to effectively learn with others. Multiple studies have shown that play-based learning helps students build skill sets in both traditional academics and social emotional growth, and helps educators trained in play-based learning develop higher-level skills in supporting students' cognitive processing.

Harvard University's Graduate School of Education recently published a book, Pedagogy of Play, based on their eight years studying students whose teachers had been trained to use play as a learning strategy. The research, based on educators from four different countries, showed that play-based learning builds creativity, flexibility, resilience and joy in students – all components that any successful learner needs as they stretch their brain to challenge themselves to learn new concepts and think critically about the information they are presented. Simply put, play-based learning creates better learners.

It is time for Oregon to join other states in supporting the use of play-based learning. New Hampshire was the first state to pass such a law in 2018. Oklahoma passed the Play to Learn Act in 2021, which prohibits districts from disallowing the teaching method. Most recently, the Connecticut legislature in 2024 passed a law requiring play-based learning for kindergarten and pre-K programs.

Play-based learning gives students critical skills needed for brain development, including developing the ability to be curious and to find meaning in their learning, lead their own learning, make choices, and have ownership and empowerment.

It's time for Oregon to give our students and educators the legal go-ahead to use play-based learning in classrooms by passing SB 1596.

Sincerely,
Reed Scott-Schwalbach
K-12 Spanish Language Educator
Past president, Oregon Education Association