

February 6, 2026

Senate Committee on Education

Dear Honorable Members:

I am a retired kindergarten teacher. I retired 8 years ago but continued to sub and volunteer in the classroom. I am strongly in favor of play based learning.

All of our classrooms have had disruptive students. The behaviors have, overall, become much worse since we are putting many more demands on them. We are expecting them to participate in a structured teacher directed instruction. Play, exploring, and problem solving, which are important parts in learning, are very limited in our current curriculums. Dealing with the disruptive students not only impedes their learning but the rest of the class as well. Teachers have to "clear the room" with their students because one student is acting out in a way that was threatening to others. I feel we need to look at our approach to teaching.

When we were required to switch from a "hands on" math curriculum to a workbook our students lost their love of math. Doing workbook pages does not encourage problem solving or creative thinking which in turn does not create a real understanding of the concepts.

We are losing a lot of instructional time for testing. We are required to do classroom testing for reading and math, along with state and district testing. In the classroom I am volunteering in this year, the kids who are daily pulled for special reading are being tested. So, for three weeks a few children a day will be tested and the rest go back into their regular classroom with no extra help. The teachers try to make it work for them but for three weeks they are losing instruction time. I am not saying we don't need any form of assessments but we can test less often, make them really useful tools, and trust teachers to know how to evaluate and teach.. My goal in kindergarten was to make learning fun and kids excited about school! The reason I retired was because with all of the requirements put on us, teaching was no longer fun, behaviors were getting worse and kids were not loving school.

There is data showing that young children learn best through play. A structured, teacher driven approach, along with testing and data does not create an environment which nurtures a love of learning. We need to address the issues of students by looking at what and how we are teaching and providing more assistance for those who are disrupting the learning of others and those needing more help academically. We need to find ways to keep them engaged in learning. Lastly, we need to look at how much testing we are doing and decide if it is really what is best for students and useful to teachers, or is it mainly used to show how our schools compare with other schools or districts.

Sincerely,

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