

Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 1596

Chair Hudson, Vice-Chairs Dobson & McIntire, and members of the House Education Committee:

Good morning. My name is Maggie Staley, and I am the principal of Rogue Primary School in Central Point, Oregon—a public K–2 school rooted in the science of how children learn through play. I am writing to express my strong support for Senate Bill 1596, which recognizes the importance of developmentally appropriate, play-based learning in Oregon’s elementary schools.

At Rogue Primary, our entire school is built on a foundation of *guided play*, a research-based pedagogy that supports academic standards through joyful, hands-on, and meaningful experiences. This approach does not replace rigorous learning—it *enhances* it. Through purposeful play, our students explore math concepts, deepen their understanding of literacy, collaborate to solve problems, and develop the executive functioning and social-emotional skills they need for long-term success. We are aligned with the same standards as every other public school—but our path to those outcomes is grounded in engagement, agency, and active learning.

The science is clear: young children learn best when they are moving, talking, exploring, and making sense of the world around them in interactive ways. Guided play aligns directly with the way the brain learns, and it offers students a sense of ownership, belonging, and joy that too often disappears under the weight of worksheets and test prep. Our school is proof that rigorous academic instruction and playful learning are not at odds—they are mutually reinforcing.

And it’s not just our students who are thriving. The shift to play-based pedagogy has brought renewed purpose and joy to my educators. Teachers are energized. They feel trusted, creative, and deeply connected to their students. In a time when educator burnout is at an all-time high, this matters. Our staff has reported increased collaboration, stronger student relationships, and a deeper sense of professional fulfillment.

Senate Bill 1596 is not simply about bringing play back to classrooms—it’s about grounding public education in what we know works. It’s about honoring childhood, trusting teachers, and giving schools the permission and support to do what’s right for students.

Thank you for your time and your consideration. I urge you to support this bill and help Oregon lead the way in creating public schools that are rigorous, equitable, and joyful places to learn and grow.

Sincerely,

Maggie Staley

Principal, Rogue Primary School
Central Point School District