

Senate Bill 596 is a second attempt by school-age anti-testing advocates to gain a legal foothold with legislation in Oregon. This is a poorly-informed bill that would make it illegal to administer ANY assessments (unless federally mandated) to preschool children in Oregon. The drafters of this bill must not realize that assessments completed with infants, toddlers, and preschoolers are not “sit-down” pencil and paper tests but are games and fun activities that give teachers some idea of children’s strengths and needs. Importantly, preschool assessments give teachers information on how best to proceed in the child’s learning environment in order to optimize children’s developmental outcomes.

Most tests given very young children are curriculum-based assessments that help with figuring out which important skills the child has, what the key skills are that the child needs (most often determined in tandem with parents), and what is the end goal for success for the child. Most often preschool assessments are “programmatic”—meaning they give teachers direct information on strategies, skills, next steps for children--whether teaching on home visits, in early learning centers, or classrooms. These assessments also help monitor the child’s progress by pinpointing what they know today, what they need to know to succeed in their environment, and if they are making progress towards meeting these goals.

Senate Bill 596 is another attempt to stop all testing in educational settings, conceptualized by advocates who think there is too much testing of school age children. I agree that school-age assessments have major problems and need further study and refinement—but passing this destructive bill would literally be throwing the baby out with the bathwater!!!