

April 5, 2021

Chair Dembrow, Vice-Chair Thompson and Members of the Senate Education Committee,

Members of the Oregon Public Education Network (OPEN) urge your support for SB 596, the “Too Young to Test” bill that would address the dramatic and harmful changes we have seen come to pass in early childhood education.

Excessive testing is sidelining so much of what we have learned about developmentally-appropriate best practices. The joys of learning and creativity are being continually replaced by a lockstep overemphasis on reading, writing and arithmetic.

The responsibility for this begins at the top, including the legislature’s acceptance of “accountability” as the price that must be exacted in exchange for decent school funding. This tragic trend has increased with the emphasis on 3rd grade reading scores in exchange for the early childhood funding in the Student Success Act. Thus, teachers and students in grades 3 and below have been placed in a pressure cooker to meet standardized test reading scores to “justify” their educational opportunities.

Likewise, the pressure to prepare students for the deeply-flawed Oregon Kindergarten Assessment (OKA) now puts inordinate pressure on pre-K teachers to have their children “ready” for the OKA. This results in a warping of the developmentally-appropriate teaching practices that have been our guiding light for years.

Please have the courage to defend these young children. Trust teachers to decide how best to assess learning in their classrooms. Please support SB 596.

Respectfully,

Members of the OPEN Steering Committee

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Roscoe Caron
Robey Clark
David Crandall
Larry Lewin
Liz Marlia-Stein
Ross Swartzendruber
Mary Thamann