

Submitter: Maggie Staley
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Education
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB948

Written Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 948
Maggie Staley
Principal, Rogue Primary School

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony in support of SB 948 which recognizes the critical role of play in education. As the principal of a K-2 school built on the science of how children learn through play, I have witnessed firsthand the transformative impact of play-based learning on young students' academic and social-emotional growth.

Research consistently shows that play is not just beneficial—it is essential for a child's development. It builds foundational skills in problem-solving, collaboration, creativity, and resilience. Play-based learning enhances cognitive development while also fostering the social and emotional skills children need to succeed both in school and in life. These skills cannot be taught through traditional academic instruction alone.

At my school, where play is embedded throughout the day, we have seen measurable benefits. Students are happier and more engaged in learning, leading to improved attendance and fewer behavioral issues. When children are given the opportunity to explore, create, and collaborate through play, they develop a sense of belonging and ownership in their learning environment. This fosters a stronger school community, where students feel safe, valued, and motivated to participate in their education.

The conversation about education reform often focuses on raising academic achievement, but we must broaden our perspective. Student success is not only about test scores—it is about cultivating a love of learning, confidence in problem-solving, and the ability to navigate the complexities of the world. If we truly want to prepare students for long-term success, we must consider their holistic development, including their beliefs and attitudes about education.

Unfortunately, in many schools, play has been drastically reduced in favor of rigid academic instruction, despite overwhelming evidence that young children learn best in environments that honor their developmental needs. Play is not a distraction from learning—it is how children learn. By engaging in play, students develop literacy and numeracy skills in meaningful, authentic ways. They engage in inquiry, experimentation, and discovery, laying the groundwork for deeper understanding and

lifelong curiosity.

We have an opportunity to reimagine education in a way that aligns with the science of learning. SB 948 would help ensure that play remains a fundamental part of our elementary classrooms, giving students the best possible foundation for success. We owe it to our children to create learning environments that support their natural development, nurture their creativity, and instill a lasting love of learning.

I urge you to support SB 948 and prioritize policies that recognize play as an essential component of education. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Maggie Staley
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Central Point School District