

February 6, 2025

Senate Education Committee
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Chair and Members of the Senate Education Committee,

Defending the Early Years (DEY) is honored to submit this testimony in strong support of SB 948, the “Play-Based Learning” bill, introduced on behalf of the Oregon Public Education Network (OPEN) in collaboration with Senator Lew Frederick. As a national nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting high-quality, just, and equitable early childhood education, we fully endorse this legislation, which will allow district school boards to provide play-based learning during instructional time for students in prekindergarten through grade five and provide professional development for educators.

Now more than ever, young children need access to play-based learning to counter the harmful effects of rigid, teacher-directed, standards-driven curriculum and assessments. Play is the primary mode of learning for young children, fostering creativity, problem-solving, social-emotional development, and cognitive growth. Research from Tennessee has demonstrated that children in academically focused preschool programs perform worse academically beyond kindergarten through sixth grade compared to their peers who experience play-based early education. This evidence underscores the necessity of providing ample opportunities for young children to play, experiment, tinker, wonder, investigate, and take agency over their learning.

Play-based learning is essential to supporting the holistic development of young learners. It nurtures curiosity, builds resilience, and lays a strong foundation for future academic success. By passing SB 948, Oregon has the opportunity to lead in fostering a child-centered, developmentally appropriate approach to early education that prioritizes the well-being and long-term success of its youngest students.

We urge you to support SB 948 and ensure that play remains a fundamental part of early education in Oregon. Thank you for your leadership and commitment to the children of Oregon.

Sincerely,





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