

Submitter:

Lawrence Robertson

On Behalf Of:

Committee:

Senate Committee On Education

Measure, Appointment or Topic:

SB1126

Dear Chair Fredericks and Members of the Committee:

I'm a teacher in the West Linn Wilsonville school district and have taught in Oregon for 14 years, and I urge you to vote NO on SB1126 as written.

Teachers have many challenges in our schools, but one of the most difficult and disruptive is student behavior. This has gotten significantly worse since the pandemic, as more students struggle with school norms. Schools in Oregon have made major changes to how we engage our students, with a much greater focus on equity, teaching social emotional skills, creating schools that are culturally responsive and foster a sense of belonging, using restorative practices, etc. These practices, while very important, have not helped reduce behavior in schools.

Teachers need to be able to give consequences as a part of teaching self-management. A couple of examples of how I use recess consequences:

1) For consistent small behaviors that interrupt learning like off task calling out or being silly with friends during lessons, I will take off a minute of recess per reminder. A minute is a small amount, but it has a huge psychologically motivating effect. Generally students on this behavior plan will only miss 3-5 minutes of recess at the start because they start making a much greater effort to engage their self-control, and that will go down to zero over time as students develop self-control.

2) For mean, disrespectful, or hurtful behaviors, I use recess time to work with that student, to discuss how to make it right, and to plan how to avoid that behavior in the future. This has many positive effects. First, missing some recess for a harmful behavior helps motivate the student to not repeat it. Second, it allows me time to work with that student that does not take away learning time from the whole class. Third, it communicates to the whole class that this is a safe place, that no one can be mean or disrespectful to others without consequences. One of the worst things for class community is if students see that other students can flout social norms, disrespect others, and disrupt learning with no consequences.

3) For students who refuse to engage in classwork, even though they can access it and have the learning support they need, I will say, "If you chose to have your recess now, then you will do your work during your recess." 95% of the time students will then engage in their schoolwork. Students who can do the work but refuse to is quite common in the younger grades. If students do not learn to engage quickly with their

schoolwork and build the stamina to work hard, they are being set up for failure as they grow older because the skills and stamina to be successful is built at the younger ages.

My wife, who is also a teacher, and I will often say, "You give recess consequences so you do not have to give recess consequences." It is possible to overuse this consequence, like it is anything, but that should be up to districts and principals to set guidelines and support teachers. Two crucial parts of being a warm demander are high expectations and accountability. The best teachers I know, teachers who have happy, well-managed classrooms that students and families love to be a part of, use recess consequences as part of a much larger toolbox for teaching self-management. I've also seen teachers who were discouraged from using recess consequences have out of control classrooms where kids do not feel safe, calm, or respected. Removing teachers' ability to give recess consequences would make it much harder for teachers to help students learn self-management around social norms, behavior, and engagement in school work.

Good teaching has a lot in common with good parenting: high expectations, lots of positive encouragement and support, clear boundaries, and clear consequences for not respecting those boundaries.

Teaching right now is an incredibly hard profession. Please do not make it even harder for us.