

Submitter: Amanda Norman
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Education
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1126

Dear Chair Fredericks and Members of the Committee:

I've been an elementary school teacher for 16 years. Currently I am a literacy coach in the West Linn Wilsonville school district and before that I was a literacy coach and reading specialist in the Centennial school district. I urge you to vote NO on SB1126 as written.

Establishing and maintaining a class culture in which every student feels safe, valued and respected forms the basis of all academic and social learning. In order to establish this community of trust and safety children need to understand that their teacher cares deeply about them and also holds them and their classmates to high expectations. Every highly successful elementary classroom teacher I know sometimes uses recess consequences judiciously, fairly and minimally. These consequences establish clear boundaries for students and often act as a time the teacher can have a conference with a student to address and help mend hurtful or unsafe behavior in the classroom without taking time away from the learning for everyone. A student who then acts to mend the hurt feelings of a classmate they teased or completes the school work they chose not to do during class is then free to play. These consequences are one tool teachers use to establish and maintain a positive, safe and productive learning environment. These are the classrooms where children love their teacher, build positive friendships with each other and make excellent academic progress.

All these successful teachers also know that taking away a few minutes of recess once or twice is most often all that is needed for students to learn that unkind words or actions are not okay or that work time is for doing school work not for playing. All these successful teachers also know that if a recess consequence or two doesn't substantially improve a child's behavior, this behavior is most likely out of the child's control and needs to be addressed in a different way. I support limits on the use of recess consequences—children need to have their physical needs for play met and these types of consequences should not be overused; however, the bill restricts all use of recess consequences. As written the bill is overly restrictive and would take away an important teaching tool for teachers and learning tool for students.