

Hello members of the Senate Education committee,

My name is Claire Parmenter. I have two boys in the Edina school district in first and third grade. While I have noticed social/emotional and psychological issues in both boys since the beginning of distance learning in the spring of 2020, I would like to focus specifically on my 8-year-old.

Kyle is a bright boy; he tests consistently in the 99% percentile for both math and reading. He has always loved school and thrives on the routine and structure. Since distance learning began, we have noticed a significant increase in his anger and frustration toward members of the family. He retreats to his room to read and re-read the same books which have become almost a security blanket for him.

Most disturbing, however, has been his recently acquired fear of abandonment. Kyle will frequently run through the house, yelling for me. He does not need anything, just wants to know where I am. We never saw this type of behavior in him prior to the pandemic. His friends and teachers were ripped from him and at age eight, it is difficult to fully understand that something similar will not happen to those closest to him.

It is obvious to me that the ebb and flow of these behaviors can be directly correlated to the school learning model. With the return to hybrid school this fall, Kyle noticeably improved. He put away the book series which he had read exclusively since distance learning began. We no longer saw him punching pillows, clenching his fists, and growling at us and his siblings. He seemed confident and secure. We felt that we had our son back. Following the announcement of a return to full distance learning, all these improvements evaporated.

To watch your child spiral, know what he needs, and be powerless to provide that for him, is devastating for a parent. We have given him every opportunity we can find, distance learning camps, play dates with friends, and any enrichment available. While these have helped, only normal, full-time school can truly begin to repair the damage that has been done.

I am terrified by the knowledge that the psychological effects of distance learning could negatively affect Kyle the rest of his life. I implore you to do what is best for our children, rather than what is best for your political ambition. They do not deserve the torture they have been put through this past year.