

Dear Representative Williams and Mr. Ruvalcaba,

My name is Jackie Lang, and I am a 16-year resident of Gardner, KS. I have five children, four of whom attend school within the Gardner-Edgerton school district (USD 231). I have two eighth graders, a fourth grader, and a kindergartener. My fourth grader and my kindergartener have been full time in person schooling since September and doing quite well. I'd like to tell you about my two eighth graders.

Isaiah and Ashton are outgoing, intelligent, motivated, kind-hearted, and talented teenagers. They both have IEPs for the Gifted Program. They are multi-sport athletes. They play in the school band, and have been recognized in various honor bands. They took the ACT as seventh graders through Duke TIP and received recognition for their exceptional scores. My son, Ashton, just won the school Spelling Bee and represented his middle school at the county level. Their list of achievements could go on.

Unfortunately for USD 231, Isaiah and Ashton will NOT be attending Gardner Edgerton High School next year. Instead, they will be attending a private school for their high school education. This may not have been the easy choice for our family, but it is the right choice. You see, during the past eleven months of "forced remote schooling," my boys have lost their motivation and lost their passion. As involved parents, we have done everything in our power to advocate for their learning. This includes, but is not limited to, contacting our superintendent, director of remote learning, and every school board member to ask questions and express our desire to be in person. We have also contacted each school district and private school within a 45 miles radius to inquire about a potential transfer.

Despite all the challenges of "forced remote learning," my boys still maintain straight A's and perform well on standardized tests. However, this is NOT because they are being challenged or because the district has done its job in educating my boys properly. Instead, it is because my boys are naturally academically gifted, and because they have a tremendous family support system. I have no doubt that my boys will succeed, but their success will not be because of USD 231 -- rather, in spite of USD 231.

My boys are lucky. I am blessed to have a flexible schedule that allows me to be home with them throughout the day. I can prompt them to stay on task, troubleshoot technology issues, make sure they eat a healthy lunch, and ensure they get physical exercise throughout the day. Most parents aren't so lucky, and their kids suffer at home trying to manage with little support. My family is fortunate to be able to send our boys to a private school beginning next year. We realize this isn't an option for most families due to financial and logistical constraints. Many of those families feel trapped in a broken education system.

I write this email to beg of you to do everything in your power to require in-person full time education for grades K-12. If schools are not able to achieve this standard of education, then they should not receive state funding. I am fully in favor of my tax dollars following my students wherever we choose to send them for school! If USD 231 cannot do the job successfully, then

we, as parents, should be able to choose the best option for our children. The funding should follow our children.

**I am advocating for in-person full time school for my own children, as well as all those students who don't have the parental support necessary during this time. Students are failing academically and struggling emotionally. Numerous studies have shown that schools are NOT the source of Covid transmission. However, schools ARE the source of academic growth and emotional stability. Covid is real, but so is mental illness. Please help us get our kids back in school full time!**

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Jackie Lang

Mom to Isaiah (13), Ashton (13), Hadley (9), Eden (6), and Beckham (3)