

Edward Penner

From: Edward Penner
Sent: Tuesday, September 15, 2020 4:45 PM
To: Edward Penner
Subject: "Virtual Learning" - A Parents Voice
Importance: High

On Sep 11, 2020, at 2:54 PM, "jlangle1982@yahoo.com" <jlangle1982@yahoo.com> wrote:

Hello- I am a Olathe parent of 2 students in this district. My daughters are 5 and 13 attending Kindergarten at Heritage Elementary and Middle School at Chisholm Trail. We are at the end of the first week of this mess called virtual/hybrid learning and I could not be more overwhelmed, frustrated, concerned or disheartened by what is taking place and being called an "education" for our children. I don't know if any of you have, or remember having, a 5 year old but the notion that they will be able to thrive and progress under these conditions is way out of touch. My 8th grader is now staying home, all day, by herself for the first time which also doesn't sit well with me. My childcare provider has 3 kids of her own and cannot help during this trying time as she is overwhelmed with her own full plate. I am now left trying to figure out an alternate solution for not only daycare but schooling assistance all while being a single, full-time working mother. The mornings are now chaos at my house while my oldest sets up for school as my youngest is full of morning energy and not quiet and I finish getting ready for work and ushering my little around to get dressed, eat, brush teeth, etc. and then get her onto her zoom class meeting by 8:30am; which, I have to delay my workday to be present for and help her stay on track during. The virtual learning experience for these kids is a joke. The teacher is trying but there is no good way to keep kids this age focused, especially on a virtual platform. After the zoom meeting I then have to leave my 13 year old daughter at home alone so that she can hear and focus on her classes (and then pray all day she's paying attention and staying on track) and take my 5 year old down to my childcare provider/friends house to be watched while I work. My friend then has to deal with monitoring her 2 older boys 14 and 13 yrs old, her 5 year old and mine. Needless to say my 5 year old's school work is not being done during the day as a result. This now means that after I have worked all day and then get home to feed my family I have to sacrifice the few precious quality moments we get at the end of our day to doing more schoolwork for my Kindergarten b/c it cannot be accomplished during the day. That in turn takes away the quality time I can spend with my older daughter as well. We are all stressed and anxiety ridden over this whole process and our family dynamic is changing in a negative way. It is beyond unfair and unrealistic to expect parents to take this on in addition to all the other challenges and daily struggles we're already dealing with.

Every time my spirit feels sad or overwhelmed I cannot help but to think of all those less fortunate than myself and how much despair and frustration they are dealing with as well. For every issue that arises that I am capable of figuring out there is another parent that potentially has less options, less help, less money, less patience, less support, more turmoil, more abuse and more of an uphill battle and I wonder how in world those children are going to progress. How are those parents going to survive making ends meet, educating their kids and keeping them safe when they can't be present but somehow are now required to be? I wonder for myself how am I going to sustain this? How will my kids suffer not just in their educational progress but also in their mental health and development? They are being required to exercise a collegiate level self management skills way before they've developed them and, in MANY cases, they are doing this home alone. I think a lot of you have also forgotten that not everyone lives in the best situation either. Some of these kids are on video classes being forced to exposed homes they never wanted their classmates to see, to sit all day in filth or without food and maybe even to be abused, to some the school day was their best and only reprieve.

The long-term effects of this are going to directly impact my children moving forward for the rest of their lives. I can honestly say that I am FAR more concerned about the consequences of this huge misstep by the school system than I have ever been about the corona virus. There is a 100% chance of the negative impacts of this horrible virtual system affecting my kids, which is MUCH higher and longer lasting than the chance they might catch or transport the virus. I personally feel that once we are able to assess the data in the future that we will find that the fallout from the economic, social and educational collapse caused by fear and a dangerous political climate are going to be much more expansive and detrimental resulting in a higher loss of life than the virus as well.

I want my voice heard, I want to matter as a parent and I want my kids to matter. I want my kids in school IN PERSON. They want to be in school and this virtual "learning" model isn't working. Week 1 was a mess and this is when the kids attention spans are at their best. The longer this drags on the worse it will be and the teachers will be starting over from square 1 with a lot of these kids when they do return. You should be required to vote supporting the desires of the parents and I think it's clear that the majority of us cannot function and support our children under these circumstances. It is compromising the safety and education of all of the kids which is directly in opposition to the policy of the United States that all children enrolled in public schools are entitled to equal educational opportunity. The virtual model is simply and obviously mostly disadvantageous for the lower income families, 2 working parent or single working parent households.

I have been working through the entire virus outbreak so living in fear and allowing that fear to control me have not been an option, I think many of you would be well served to step outside of that mindset as well. There are many things to be afraid of in life and everyday we step out in the face of those things, this needs to be one of those times as well. I can guarantee that during this week of virtual classes most, if not all, of you have gone to Walmart/Target, gotten gas or visited many other locations that contain a lot more possibility of exposure to the virus that going to work and teaching these kids. If the risk of death is worth it to drive your car and the risk of exposure is worth it to fuel it up then why isn't it worth the risk to educate our children?

Josie Langley
Concerned Olathe Mom