

Good Morning. My name is Carter Stelting and I am a junior at Olathe South High school. For more than seven months, students like me have lived in a world of difficulty, sadness, depression, unknowing, anxiousness, and frustration because of school. I miss learning with my friends. This fall, we began our virtual home learning after Labor Day and transitioned to hybrid learning three weeks ago. The hybrid model is slightly better than all virtual. We still have to self-teach ourselves as we are only receiving half of the in-person class time. Frustration is still part of many students lives. Last week a girl from my school ran away and a few weeks ago there was a student suicide in our area.

As we are facing these challenges, Aly Arenholz, an 8th grader at Frontier Trail Middle School invited Olathe High School and Middle School students to take a survey she created. 1,778 KIDS took the time to share their feelings about virtual school and at-home learning

Of the total respondents, **82%** have felt stressed, **61%** felt frustrated, and **57%** felt lonely!

One student responded "I want to go to school. I want to learn. Sitting for hours on end alone in silence, leaves me with no self-value. It's depressing."

Brooke Wesley, a counselor and Clinical Director of Bellatore Recovery said, "I have sent **more** kids to Residential treatment and/or the *hospital* for mental health issues in the **past two months** than I have in the past three **years!!!!**

Of all students surveyed **85%** said they are generally very good learners, however only **10%** think they are good learners in the at-home virtual setting.

One student said “I finished with a 4.2 GPA last year and this year I already have 2 D’s. It is so hard for me to learn and focus virtually and I would do anything to go back in person.”

Aly’s survey also found that 80% of respondents said they **focus** better in the classroom while only 6% focus better virtually.

Following me today will be my brother and sister who will be reading some of the actual responses of students who responded to Aly’s survey. These are the real words and sentiments of several middle and high school students from Olathe, but I feel their words are reflective of many kids across the state of Kansas. Our mental health is important too. **I beg you to give us the same hours of in-person education that we have always received and that this Board has mandated. Nothing less.**