

To Whom it may concern,

I write to you today and ask you to do the right thing for our children and fully fund special education in Kansas. I could write a novel on how much my children's teachers have done for us and how I have seen my children grow in ways I never thought imaginable. And, I could write a novel on how the loss of Paras, shifts in programs and lack of funding have hurt progress and sent them into regression. That is where the pain is.

For the last 2 years my son has been in a separate classroom, in a cubical, in the corner. My school can't afford to bring in a behavioral therapist to the environment where he has started randomly hitting other kids. They don't have the tools they need to help get him past this and they can't take the chance of him hitting so they have put him in a corner.

For him it's a loss of time in the regular classroom setting, where he should be learning to function in society. To be with the regular kids and feel normalcy. For the other kiddos it's taking away the opportunity to engage with and navigate how to live in the same world with those who are not typical.

I would love to say I know where this comes from but he's nonverbal. What I can say is it started at a time of constant change. It started at a school who had just been given a SPED program. In a school where the staff and teachers were not prepared or trained for what that meant. With teachers who were frustrated for all the same reasons, and who eventually left.

It's 8th grade. My children (twin boys, one now mainstreamed) have gone to 3 different elementary schools and 3 different middle schools at no fault to us. We didn't move or ask for a change. We chose a place for stability that has been anything but stable. Some of it is the district it's self but more so because teachers are tired of being short changed. Needing something for their students that the district can't afford. Having a shortage of Paras leaving the teachers to take on more work...work they don't get compensated for. They are burnt out. Tired of advocating and hearing no, tired of trying to reinvent the wheel because this child needs an AAC device and there are no extras in the district. And tired of all the change because if they shuffle programs, consolidate and change the kids' worlds they might just save a dollar.

These children go through so much change. Change that stops them in their tracks and rocks their worlds. That trickles into all facets of their lives. It puts a strain on the schools, the staff, the students, their families, and it needs to stop. Investing in our children is investing in all of us. They are brilliant and a part of this world just like the rest of us. It's time we stop putting them in a corner.

Thank you,

Sara Moore – Parent to exceptional children