

DECLARATION OF THOMAS IBARRA

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2 I, Thomas Ibarra, hereby declare:

3 1. I make this declaration based on my own personal knowledge and if called to testify
4 I could and would do so competently as follows:

5 2. I am a fifth grade teacher at Gulf Avenue Elementary School in Wilmington. I have
6 been at Gulf since August of 1998.

7 3. When I first started teaching at Gulf in August of 1998, I took over a class midway
8 through its school year cycle. Because Gulf is a multi-track year-round school my students had had
9 five previous substitute teachers in one month, and had had other substitutes before that. My class
10 was not the only one that had a series of substitute teachers instead of a single permanent teacher.
11 These situations deprive the children of an essential part of education: a consistent program that
12 builds upon prior lessons. Substitutes and short-term replacements often do not put in the effort that
13 a full-year teacher does. Students need a teacher whom they can bond with and who cares enough
14 to stay a full year with them. A string of different teachers results in no program being followed, and
15 no bonding between students and teachers.

16 4. Gulf is a multi-track school where students are in session year-round. The B track is
17 the least popular with teachers because the track has the longest breaks between times when school
18 is in session and because the children in B track tend to have the most learning and discipline
19 problems. Consequently, there are significant teacher vacancies in the B track. Often teachers from
20 other tracks fill these vacancies by taking time away from their own off track time, but these teachers
21 often do not stay for the entire duration of the track because they need some time off themselves.
22 I know one teacher who will fill in for one month, until a new substitute comes in for another month,
23 because the teacher I know will use that second month to prepare for her own class. There is
24 essentially no educational program followed when students have different teachers substituting in to
25 cover their classes.

26 5. In my class, I noticed the difference between kids who had a permanent teacher the
27 year before and those who had a string of substitutes. The kids without a consistent teacher had more
28 discipline problems, and read at a second grade level, even though I taught a fourth and fifth grade

1 combination class. Having a single permanent teacher makes a tremendous difference in children's
2 ability to learn.

3 6. Gulf has a high percentage of uncredentialed teachers and most of those teachers
4 aggregate on the B track. From my count of the current B track roster, 10 of the 23 B track teachers
5 do not have their teaching credentials. That means that students on B track are particularly
6 disadvantaged because their teachers have little experience and also their teachers have virtually no
7 one with experience to turn to for guidance.

8 7. There is a severe lack of textbooks at Gulf. Children must share the books they do
9 have. I buy textbooks at my own expense and make copies for the students, also at my own expense.
10 The number of pages I am allowed to copy at the school's expense is not nearly enough to give my
11 students material throughout the year. From July to December I had no math books at all. I have
12 to buy science materials on my own, because none are provided. For my students, I purchased 14
13 sets of the core literature books, which was more than the entire school owned. When students don't
14 have their own textbooks they suffer because the chapters in the book build on the previous chapters.
15 With only photocopies they can not reference past chapters to help solve issues in the current chapter.

16 8. The classrooms are infested with vermin. In January of 2000, my class had a rat
17 problem that took the school four days to address. By the time rat traps were installed, I had to
18 throw away \$100 worth of books ruined by rat feces. Rats were running all over the classroom and
19 over my students' backpacks. No learning could be accomplished because children were
20 understandably reacting to rats scurrying about the room. I see roaches regularly, and right now my
21 classroom is swarmed with ants.

22 9. The bathrooms are kept in an unsanitary condition. Frequently, there are no paper
23 towels, no toilet paper, no soap and the toilet is clogged.

24 10. Gulf Avenue Elementary frequently combines children from two different grade levels
25 within one classroom. It is impossible for children to tackle the proper grade level curriculum that
26 the Department of Education requires. The result is that students are unable to meet grade level
27 standards. Teachers teach the lower level material and the higher grades lose a year of educational

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1 development. Combination classes, as they are called, have been used consistently as long as I have
2 been involved at Gulf Avenue Elementary. Last year I taught a combination fourth and fifth grade
3 class. I could not teach the fifth graders the normal fifth grade curriculum, which would have
4 included fractions, and long division, for example, because I spent the year teaching fourth grade
5 concepts. The fifth graders lost a year of education.

6 11. The children perform noneducational duties such as picking up trash on the school
7 grounds during their instructional time. The school requires children to perform these tasks because
8 we do not have enough support staff who should be doing this kind of work. My fourth and fifth
9 grade students have picked up such dangerous articles as beer bottles, used condoms, cigarette butts,
10 and bullets. Also, the school does not provide gloves to the children. The worst part of "school
11 beautification" time is that teachers must cut into the students' reading time. Reading time is when
12 we have students read aloud, or read silently along with the teacher. For school beautification, the
13 school implemented a rotating cycle in which each class takes its turn cleaning the school grounds
14 for a week. In an average school year, my class has four weeks when it is our turn to clean the
15 grounds. We spend five minutes each day those weeks picking up garbage instead of reading.
16 Cutting into this time is not fair to the students.

17 12. Students also lose educational time when teachers are required to "rove." Roving
18 teachers are teachers who must share a classroom with other teachers, and at Gulf that is every single
19 teacher because we are a multi-track year-round school. When the time comes for a teacher from
20 another track to take over a room, the departing teacher takes up to a week to box his things for
21 storage. On some days, the school gathers children from several classes together in the auditorium
22 to watch movies so their teachers can have time to box up and empty their classrooms.

23 13. Special Education services are insufficient. One of my students was a Special
24 Education student who was being mainstreamed. Mainstreamed students are entitled to receive
25 Special Education services, but this child received none. I pulled his Individual Education Plan at the
26 end of the year and noticed he had not met with the Special Education teacher even once during the
27 year.

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I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of California that the foregoing
is true and correct. Executed on July 20, 2000 at Rancho Palos Verdes, California.


Thomas Ibarra