

**Declaration of Gregory Colleton**

I, Gregory Colleton, hereby declare:

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

2. I have been both a full-time and part-time teacher at Hosler Middle School in Lynwood for three years. In the 1998-1999 school year, I taught a self-contained sixth grade class, which meant that I taught every subject. In the 1999-2000 school year, I taught four periods of seventh grade English, and one period of violin. In the 2000-2001 school year, I served as a substitute working approximately three out of five days during the week at Hosler teaching a whole variety of classes.

3. I can't describe to you how horrible and depressing the school is. The windows in the classrooms are dark and so the kids can't see out, and many of them are broken and permanently shut together. There is black top everywhere, and there is nothing pretty or green that the children can see. The paint is peeling. The bathrooms are dirty. The lockers are all broken up. There is really no room for the children to play or do anything active on the campus. This sounds crazy, but they are storing supplies and AV equipment on the gymnasium floor which means that there is no room for the children to play there. There are security guards, because there were two violent incidents that happened at the park across from the school during the last two years. I have seen cockroaches in the classrooms. These children should not be in a school like this. I would never ever want my children to go to a school like this. It is hard for these children to imagine that they can have anything better than this or that there are possibilities for them outside of Lynwood, but I try to instill confidence in them, and I would tell them that they deserved more. A father of one of the children in my class who is an immigrant to this country said to me once, you know Mr. Colleton I don't know very much about America, but I know that what is happening at this school is not right.

4. As a sixth grade teacher during the 1998-1999 school year, I had a class with 33 students. We had a total of 10 math books for all 33 of my students to use at the beginning of the year — seven math books in English and three in Spanish. However, at the start of the year I

1 gave the three English math books to my friend who was teaching another class, because he  
2 didn't have any math textbooks at all. It was terrible, because basically everyday I had to either  
3 write the full assignment on the board so that the students could write it down on their own  
4 sheets, which was an incredible waste of time, or I would leave the students in class and make a  
5 run to the xerox machine to copy pages for their homework assignment. Not only was this a  
6 waste of paper, but an incredible waste of instructional time. It was also common for teachers to  
7 run out of their supply of paper for the xerox machine, or the machine would be broken. We  
8 didn't have any literature books either. We had no grammar books for the class, but I started  
9 searching in the classroom cabinets, and I found 40 books (an incredible find) from 1970 that  
10 were all dusty and old, but could be used to teach the kids basic parts of speech. Most of the time  
11 I just got creative with the children, because we didn't have appropriate materials for them to use.  
12 One time I made photocopies of portions of a book describing top colleges in California. I had  
13 them read about the colleges, and then write about which colleges they wanted to go to when  
14 they grow up. We also didn't have enough health books. In fact, I shared my set of textbooks  
15 with a teacher from across the hall. At first we would carry the health books back and forth  
16 across the hall whenever one of us wanted to use the health books for our students, but that  
17 wasted a lot of time. We finally decided that just one of us would teach health, and so my class  
18 would go to his room during that time, and I would teach his class. It was pretty ridiculous.

19         5.         This year, because I am a substitute in a variety of classes I can't always tell  
20 whether or not the children have enough books, because many times the lesson plan doesn't use  
21 the book, or I am only left photocopies to distribute to the children. I assume that when I am left  
22 photocopies that it is because the children don't have appropriate material. Sometimes if we are  
23 using the book during any given period students will push their desks together and share books --  
24 two students per book.

25         6.         When I taught seventh grade, and this year when I have been a substitute teacher  
26 in a variety of classes it has been normal for me to have classes with 35, 38, and even one class  
27 with 43 students. I have never had a core class under 30 students. In classes this large you never  
28 have enough desks for all the students, and it is always really crowded and hectic. At the

1 beginning of each semester it is horrendous, because all of the teachers are basically running  
2 around and bargaining for desks and seats from each other. For example, I traded some math  
3 books during my sixth grade year for an extra desk for my class, and I saw other teachers doing  
4 the same. It is so horribly sad that it is almost funny if you think about it. Teachers go from  
5 classroom to classroom trying to get enough books and seats so that they can teach their children  
6 just the very basics. One day there were several of the really old, kind of messed up wooden  
7 desks sitting in the hallway. I knew the janitors were going to throw them away, and so I had  
8 some of the students go outside into the hall and carry them into the class so that we could use  
9 them.

10 7. When there are so many children in your classroom -- as many as 43 students -- it  
11 is very overwhelming. The worst part is that you usually have such a wide range of children in  
12 the classes, from children who cannot speak English at all to some who are completely proficient.  
13 When I have a class of that size with children at different levels, I cannot give the children the  
14 one-on-one time they really need to catch up. Really the only time I can give them help is after-  
15 school hours. It is also sad for the children who are ready to learn more and want to move  
16 forward, because sometimes I just have to slow down, and then those kids get frustrated and  
17 bored. That is really rough. On paper our school is supposed to have teaching assistants for the  
18 large classes, but I never had one.

19 8. We had no air conditioning or heat in my classroom during 1998-1999 or the  
20 1999-2000 school year, and so sometimes the children and I were freezing cold and other times  
21 the children and I were dying of heat. The same is true this year for most of the classes that I  
22 substitute teach in at Hosler. It is usually pretty hot for about five months of the school year --  
23 two months in fall from September until the end of October and about three months in the spring  
24 from April until the end of June when school lets out. When it is hot, we prop the doors open, but  
25 that really isn't a good solution because it is so noisy outside from construction or children  
26 running around, and so the children get really distracted. Basically there is nothing we can do  
27 about it, and the children, even though it is so terrible, seem to just learn to accept the bad  
28 conditions. They know the school is a complete hole in the wall. When it's freezing and wet

1 outside which is generally during the rainy season from about the middle of November until  
2 February the children share coats if one of them didn't bring warm enough clothing. A couple of  
3 times when it was really cold I had all the children run around the room, and told them it was to  
4 get their blood pumping. One time we actually went outside and took a run around the block.  
5 Really though, there are not a lot of alternatives, and if the children don't have warm enough  
6 clothing, then there is not a whole lot that can be done. It is strange, because I know of some  
7 classes that do have air conditioning and heat, but it is really random, and we didn't have it  
8 during sixth and seventh grade, and I know a lot of other teachers who don't have it either.  
9 However, there are thermostats in the rooms, but when you try to turn them on they don't work.

10 9. Our library is horrendous. I believe there are about 150 books in the library, they  
11 are all at least 10 years old, and the children can't check them out. I don't think they even have a  
12 check-out system in place. I wanted my children to do book reports, and so I had to get field trip  
13 passes to walk my children to Lynwood Library so they could actually check out a book to take  
14 home and read to do their report. I know that the library is still like this, because I have passed  
15 by it several times this year.

16 10. I don't have any computers in my classroom, but at the end of my first year I found  
17 out that we did have a computer lab at the school, but the computers are really old and have only  
18 black and white screens. The best you can say about the computers is that at least they work.

19 11. I play the violin, and so one day when I was walking through the school I saw a  
20 whole stack of violins, I would say about 50 of them, and I got this idea to start a violin program  
21 for the children. So I petitioned the school, and the next semester we had 16 students signed up  
22 to take violin. However, sometime between when I had the idea and when the program started  
23 someone stole all but 12 of the violins, and the ones that they left us were broken, cracked, and  
24 had strings missing. At one point we had one working violin for all of the students to use, and so  
25 basically each student would get to use the violin for probably a total of 15 minutes during an  
26 entire week of class. There were no music books at the school either, so I called my old violin  
27 teacher and had him send me a book, and I made photocopies of the pages. It just broke my  
28 heart, because these kids just wanted to learn this stuff so badly. I had put in an order with the

1 school at the beginning of the semester for new violins, and they kept promising me the violins  
2 would come, but they never did. So finally, I went to a friend and told him I didn't know if he  
3 would ever get paid, but if he would just fix the violins that I had left and then rent us a few more  
4 until the end of the year, he would make a lot of kids really happy. He took a huge risk, and we  
5 got the violins. You should have seen these kids. They learned eight songs, and they can read  
6 music like you wouldn't believe. After the students got the violins, everything else got better too  
7 — their school work improved, they were more confident, and they started studying harder, all  
8 because they had this thing that they could be proud of. At the end of the school year, I had to  
9 find a place for these kids to show off their stuff, but the school really did not support me, so I  
10 basically had my friends come with their cars, and we all drove across the city so that the  
11 children could play their hearts out at a dinner that their parents attended, and then I got someone  
12 to donate tickets to the symphony. It really tears me up inside because these kids are so hungry  
13 to learn, and they are just dying for something to believe in, and the schools don't have the  
14 resources.

15       12. There are few programs outside of school for the children to be involved in. The  
16 teachers basically spend their own time and money creating things for the children to do. For  
17 example, one of the teachers started an art program after school, and I started a soccer program.  
18 We really need to have after-school programs so that the children have somewhere they can go  
19 and feel safe and have something to look forward to.


20       13. I was also the basketball coach at the school. It was horrible because a lot of  
21 times we would have games, and even though the administrators had supposedly called the bus,  
22 sometimes it just wouldn't show up to pick us up to go the game. One time our team rode the bus  
23 to the game, but after we finished the game the bus never came back to pick us up. So while the  
24 students were walking home two of my students were jumped by students from another school.  
25 It just makes you sick to your stomach. These things shouldn't happen.

26       14. There have been two principals at the school since I have worked there, and I  
27 haven't seen any changes. No one is held accountable for what is happening to the money at that  
28 school. I know they have money, but it just doesn't seem to see the light of day in this school. At

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this school, I've realized that the only thing I can control is my own classroom, and that there is really nothing I can do about all of the other horrible things going on at the school.

I declare under penalty of perjury of the laws of the State of California and the United States that the foregoing is true and correct. Executed this 17 day of June, 2001 in Los Angeles, California.

  
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Gregory Colleton