

Declaration of George Cole

I, George Cole, 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 am a city council member in the City of Bell, as well as the head of a non-profit that, among other things, sponsors the healthy start programs at several of the elementary schools, provides a free lunch program for children when they are off track, and provides activities and other services to high school students when they are off track. I have been a city council member for 17 years. I am intimately involved with issues in the schools, and I have worked closely with parents, teachers, and students at the schools in Bell to bring attention to the horrible overcrowding and dismal conditions for students in our schools.

3. District J, the school District in which the students of Bell City go to school, is the most overcrowded. A study showed in 2000 that District J had 38 schools for 62,000 students. (District D had 76 schools for 57,000 students) Since that time only one new school has opened, a primary center and the population continues to grow. In 1978, Elizabeth Street elementary school in Cudahy went to a multi-track calendar to accommodate all of the students on the campus. At that same time Woodlawn Elementary in Bell went to half day sessions and then in 1980 also went on a multi-track schedule. Shortly after that all of the schools in Bell City went to a multi-track calendar because of overcrowding.

4. Woodlawn Elementary School in Bell City is a multi-track school and it is extremely overcrowded. The school was built for about half of the students that actually go there now. As a result of overcrowding, the physical plant has been severely impacted. It is not designed to handle the volume of students currently enrolled in the school. The administration has converted what was a dedicated technology center into a classroom. The seats in the school's auditorium have been removed, and the school now holds three classes at a time in that space. There are no physical barriers between the different classes in the auditorium and so the students have difficulty hearing their teachers, difficulty concentrating in class, and difficulty learning. Classes are also being conducted in the cafeterias. The playgrounds are so overcrowded that the

1 students don't have enough space to play because they have become so covered with
2 bungalows/portables. Students are sitting on the floors outside to eat because there is no place
3 else for them to go. The hallways are crowded, and the classrooms are packed. At Woodlawn the
4 students will never be able to participate in a full school assembly because the students at the
5 school cannot all fit into the auditorium space together.

6 5. The auditorium at Woodlawn, which currently houses as many as three classes of
7 students each period of the school day, has no air conditioning. When I have visited the
8 auditorium during school on hot days, I can barely stand it. It feels like you are in a sweat box.
9 The administrators have placed huge fans in the auditorium but it does not help all that much.
10 Students and teachers are sweating. Students have difficulty focusing and they are
11 uncomfortable. How can students be expected to learn in an environment like that?

12 6. Students in schools that are on the multi-track system are at a great disadvantage
13 because they are in school fewer days than regular calendar children. Additionally, the school
14 year is broken up and there are big gaps between periods when the students are in school and
15 periods when they are out of school. On a Concept 6 multi-track calendar, like the one used for
16 District J, students on Tracks A and C are in school for 4 months and off for 2 months. Track B
17 is in school for 2 months then off for 2 months then back in for 4 months then off for 2 months
18 and back in for 2 months. This is very disruptive to both teachers and students.

19 7. There are teachers in schools throughout District J that must roam from classroom
20 to classroom because there are not enough available classrooms for them to teach in. I have
21 spoken with teachers who roam, and they tell me how difficult it is to teach without a stable
22 classroom. These teachers carry their books and materials all over the campus every day.

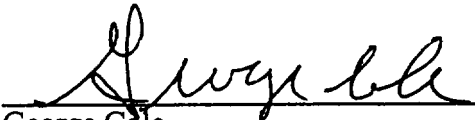
23 8. Bell High School has probably the worst overcrowding in the entire district. The
24 school was built in 1924 and now it holds some 4,800 students. Parents and students have told
25 me that classes are so crowded that it is hard to have materials for all the students, such as books.
26 I have visited the school and it is extremely crowded in the hallways and physically difficult to
27 get around the school. At lunch time, the lines for the cafeteria are so long that often students at
28 the back of the lines will not get to eat because the school physically is not large enough to serve

1 that many students. At lunch time, there is no place for the students to all eat, they sit in stairs, on
2 the ground, and it is difficult for them to move around the campus.

3 9. Bathrooms are an issue at all of the schools in the district because the campuses
4 were designed for about half the number of students who are on them now. When I say that the
5 bathrooms are an issue, I mean that they are nearly impossible to keep clean and supplied with
6 material. These bathrooms just were not designed to serve the number of students they currently
7 serve. Many kids won't even use them.

8 10. The students in District J are at an extreme disadvantage. These students do not
9 have the same access to the quality of educational facilities or educational opportunities that
10 students in richer areas receive. While District J has one of the highest percentages of students
11 eligible for free lunches, it also has the highest ratio of students per school. District D has the
12 lowest number of students eligible for free lunches and has the lowest ratio of students per
13 school.

14
15
16 I declare under penalty of perjury of the laws of the State of California and the United
17 States that the foregoing is true and correct. Executed this 2nd day of October, 2001 in Bell,
18 California.

19
20 
George Cole.