

Declaration of Lorraine Holmes

I, Lorraine Holmes, 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 the grandmother of three children who attend Edison-McNair and Edison-Brentwood, both of which are in East Palo Alto. My granddaughter Tealena just finished the third grade at Edison-Brentwood in June of 2001 and will be returning to Edison-McNair in the fall for fourth grade. My granddaughter Kimani just finished kindergarten at Edison-Brentwood in June of 2001 and will be returning to the school in the fall for first grade. My granddaughter April just finished fifth grade at Edison-McNair in June of 2001 and will be returning to sixth grade at the school in the fall. I am on the school site council of Edison-McNair, and I am the district advisory council representative for Edison-McNair. I am also the alternate for the district advisory council for Edison-Brentwood.

3. There is a real shortage of bilingual teachers at Edison-McNair. Only four teachers at the school are fluent in Spanish, and three others have just barely passable Spanish language skills. However, a huge majority of the students at the school are Spanish speakers and so the Spanish speaking children really suffer when they can't get the assistance they need to learn English, math, and their other subjects. Additionally, we have a sizeable Arabic and Samoan population at the school. Many times those students don't speak English, and their parents don't speak English. I have seen teachers leave children with just a coloring book to work on because they cannot communicate with the children when they enroll in school. We need a better and more comprehensive way to work effectively with families whose second language is English. During her fifth grade year in 2000-2001, my granddaughter April was one of two English speaking students in one of her classes. All of the rest of the students in the class had limited English skills. The teacher had to work extra hard to help the E.L.L. students and often my granddaughter was unable to get her questions answered. We definitely need more assistance for teachers teaching students whose first language is not English.

4. There is a waiting list for the bilingual program, and so many of the students have

1 to go to summer school to get the bilingual training they are required to have in order to go onto
2 high school.

3 5. I am very concerned about the class sizes at both Edison-Brentwood and Edison-
4 McNair. Many of the classes have thirty or more students, and it is difficult for a teacher to teach
5 that size of class without a classroom aide. There are also too many young teachers without the
6 experience necessary to really be effective in the classroom. When a teacher is not experienced
7 the teacher is unable to maintain class order. Instead of spending time teaching the teachers
8 spend the majority of their time trying to control the classroom. I believe that if we had more
9 teachers with full credentials, training, and experience then our children would be receiving a
10 much better education.

11 6. Teacher turnover is a real problem at both Edison-McNair and Edison-Brentwood.
12 Many of the schools' teachers leave each year. The teachers do not earn enough money to afford
13 housing in this neighborhood or to stay motivated to get through difficult times with the children.
14 The state should assist teachers with housing so that they can live near the school. So many of
15 the teachers must travel almost an hour just to come work here, because they cannot afford the
16 housing prices. They get tired of that and they just end up leaving. This also takes away from
17 teachers' ability to be effective in the classroom because by the time they arrive at school they are
18 already tired from their long commute.

19 7. Edison-McNair and Edison-Brentwood are overcrowded. There are just too many
20 children in the school and not enough classrooms. I have seen art and music classes being held
21 in the cafeteria at least twice a week at Brentwood because there just isn't space for these classes
22 in regular classrooms. Additionally, the hallways are very crowded during class period changes
23 and so when my granddaughter April wants to go to science class at McNair she will have to wait
24 outside the science classroom for the class that is currently inside to come out before she can go
25 in. Sometimes this can take up to ten to fifteen minutes between rotations, and so the students
26 lose class time.

27 8. I have been to Los Altos junior high school, and the students there have about one
28 computer for every student. At the Edison schools we probably have about one computer for

1 every ten students, and at any given time at least four of the computers we have are broken down
2 and need to be repaired. We are in the center of Silicon Valley and this is a computer run world.
3 I am very concerned that my grandchildren and other children at the school will not have the
4 experience with using the computer that they need to succeed in this world. It is not fair that
5 some schools have the resources while others do not.

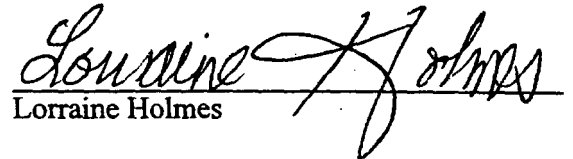
6 9. The students at Edison-McNair have to share textbooks in some of their classes.
7 In the time I have spent at the school during the last two years, I have gone into approximately
8 seven separate classrooms where I saw students sharing two students to a book. The students
9 should not have to share textbooks. They should be able to take home their materials so that they
10 can use the models, examples, and explanations in the book to learn from. Additionally, it is
11 important that parents get hands on knowledge of what the students are doing during the school
12 day so that learning can continue after school hours. Also, it is difficult for children to copy
13 everything off the board, and sometimes children forget to write something down or they may not
14 get everything they learned in class and if it is not in their notes then they may just turn in an
15 incomplete assignment because they have nothing to look at for reference. Additionally, the
16 teachers are using valuable classroom time to copy things from their master books. For example,
17 teachers must wait for students to copy down their math assignments number by number from the
18 board. The lottery was supposed to help provide the students with the resource they need, and it
19 is a mystery to me what has happened to that money. Unequivocally, the children should each
20 have a book or instructional materials to take home with them. The teachers should not have to
21 spend ten to fifteen minutes out of each instructional hour just for students to copy down
22 homework assignments. The children deserve better.

23 10. During April's fifth grade year in her science class at McNair she was only
24 allowed to take a book home for two to three days per month, because the teacher would rotate
25 the few books she had so that students had a chance to actually bring a book home. But I wanted
26 my granddaughter to be able to bring her book home with her all the time, because I know she is
27 able to do her homework assignment better when she actually has the materials in front of her. I
28 would go to the public library near my home and put her name on the waiting list for her to be

1 able to check out her textbook, and if the book wasn't in the public library near my home, because
2 often it was not, then I would go to find it at the Mountain View or Palo Alto library which are
3 further away from my home. I am lucky because I am a grandmother now and I have time to do
4 these things for my grandchildren. However, most parents at the Edison schools do not have the
5 time or the money to be able to do this. Many of them are working two jobs. All of the children
6 need books, and they need to be able to take them home. Children fall behind when they don't
7 have the resources they need to finish their homework.

8 11. At Edison-McNair I believe we had an approximately 31% passing rate for
9 students going on from eighth grade to high school for the school year that just ended. With the
10 resources we have, especially in the area of ELL teachers, it is just too difficult to serve these
11 children the way they need to be served in order to succeed.

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13 I declare under penalty of perjury of the laws of the State of California and the United
14 States that the foregoing is true and correct. Executed this 12 day of July, 2001 in East Palo
15 Alto, California.

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17 Lorraine Holmes
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