

1 **Declaration of Stephanie Crement**

2 I, Stephanie Crement, hereby declare:

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

5 2. I am a teacher at Edison-McNair Academy in East Palo Alto. During the 2000-  
6 2001 school year I taught two classes, a seventh grade writing class and a mixed seventh/eighth  
7 grade reading class. During the 1999-2000 school year I taught English as a second language  
8 (ESL) and Spanish to both seventh and eighth grade students. I have taught at Edison-McNair  
9 for two years, and I will be returning in the fall of 2001 for my third year.

10 3. I am extremely concerned about the high teacher turnover rate at Edison-McNair  
11 Academy. During the 1999-2000 school year two thirds of our staff left at the end of the year.  
12 We need consistency in our staff in order to run successful programs for our students.  
13 Additionally, without a cadre of teachers who have experience at the school we end up having to  
14 completely start over at the beginning of each school year. The children really suffer when there  
15 is not a consistent staff of teachers. The level of education that a school can provide suffers  
16 when teachers do not stay and help the school and students to grow and expand.

17 4. During about the first few weeks of the 2000-2001 school year our school was  
18 about nine teachers short. This meant other teachers had to cover the classes of teachers who  
19 were not yet hired. There also was no schedule in place because we did not have any teachers to  
20 fill in the spots. Administrators had to change around the entire school day. Students had  
21 additional recess breaks that they would not normally have because we just did not have a class  
22 for them to go to. This was truly exhausting for both the teachers and the students. Additionally,  
23 several of the teachers we had hired for P.E., art, and music were covering regular classes, and  
24 the school administrators had to cut art, music, Spanish, and other "specials" out of the schedule  
25 until the school was able to find teachers to fill the nine vacant spaces. For example, the P.E.  
26 teacher was covering a science class.

27 5. I believe one of the key reasons we had open teaching positions and have  
28 difficulty finding teachers for Edison-McNair is salary-related. Often, those teachers who are

1 interested in teaching at our school cannot afford to live in the Palo Alto area and they can't find  
2 housing so they won't come here to teach. During the 2000-2001 school year our principal asked  
3 teachers who already had housing to host other teachers or help find them housing. For example,  
4 the principal told us at a staff meeting at the beginning of the 2000-2001 school year that we  
5 might not have a world language teacher if we could not find that teacher a place to stay. The  
6 state really needs to pay the teachers a salary that allows them to stay in their jobs and to make a  
7 career out of teaching. Every day teachers work above and beyond what is required of them  
8 because they love the children and they care about making a difference. I work on the weekends  
9 and after-school making lesson plans, grading papers, making phone calls to parents, and just  
10 preparing for classes. The state needs to pay teachers a salary that encourages them to remain in  
11 the teaching profession and to consider teaching a life-long career.

12         6.       There is a terrible substitute shortage in the state and it affects teachers' ability to  
13 teach and students' ability to learn. The administration at Edison-McNair cannot find substitutes  
14 to come and teach at the school. As a result, it has become an unspoken rule that teachers can't  
15 miss class because if a teacher is absent then another teacher, who is a colleague, must cover a  
16 portion or all of the class for the teacher who is absent. At Edison-McNair when one of the  
17 teachers is absent that teacher's class is usually divided up into groups of four or five students.  
18 Then the groups of students are sent to different teachers' classes for the entire school day. This  
19 disrupts the school day for all of the teachers and makes it difficult for students in classes with  
20 additional children to learn. Sometimes teachers also cover other teachers' classes during their  
21 preparatory periods. I personally have covered classes during my preparatory periods, when there  
22 has been no substitute to teach a class. I believe that it is important to have substitutes available  
23 so that teachers can take a day off if there is an emergency. In addition, teachers should be able  
24 to observe other teachers and participate in professional development opportunities. Sometimes,  
25 this means missing a day or part of a day of school. Also, if a teacher does miss a day of school,  
26 students should have a substitute in their classroom instead of having students split up and  
27 shipped off to other teachers in different grades and different classes as is done at Edison-  
28 McNair.

1           7.       At one point, the school administrators hired a permanent substitute who would  
2 fill in whenever someone was missing, but one of the sixth grade teachers left the school in  
3 January of 2001 shortly after the permanent substitute was hired. This meant that the permanent  
4 substitute who was hired had to take over for the teacher who left, and so again the school had a  
5 substitute problem.

6           8.       At Edison-McNair there are too many teachers who do not have their full  
7 credentials, and I believe it is essential that teachers obtain their full credentials. During the  
8 2000-2001 school year more than 70% of the teachers at our school did not have their full  
9 credentials. I have seen many teachers come to our school without their full credentials, and they  
10 really struggle. For many teachers without their full credentials, the first day of school at Edison-  
11 McNair may be the first time they have ever stood in front of a classroom of children to teach.  
12 The first year of teaching is difficult for everyone, and having a credential at least gives teachers  
13 a foundation in teaching. When a teacher has full credentials it means that the teacher has spent  
14 time in a classroom working underneath a mentor teacher, assisting with a classroom, observing  
15 a senior teacher in action, and having a chance to actually teach a group of students. Without  
16 their full credentials, teachers do not have the theory to work from to really make it work for the  
17 children in the classroom. I just finished all of my course work to obtain my full credentials.  
18 However, during my first year of teaching I came into the class with only the training I received  
19 as a part of the Teach For America program, a program which places recent college graduates  
20 into schools that are struggling. My Teach for America training helped me a lot, because I had a  
21 summer teaching a summer school class and many hours of required observation and mentorship  
22 which most emergency credentialed teachers never receive. Because of my Teach For America  
23 training I at least knew what to do on the first day of class, how to set up the class, and some  
24 rules to have the children follow. Most uncredentialed teachers do not even have that kind of  
25 training.

26           9.       It upsets me that people think that teaching is just so easy and that if you like  
27 children then you can be a teacher. Teaching is a true art form. It takes practice, skill, and  
28 training to really become a good teacher. My classes have thirty-three and more children in them

1 and each child has different strengths and weaknesses. In one year I try to reach multiple goals  
2 with each child for each subject area. The state relies on a lot of young, enthusiastic people to  
3 make the schools work, but teaching is about a lot more than just enthusiasm. This is a  
4 profession, and unless the state treats it with the respect it deserves then we will continue to have  
5 the problems of high teacher turnover and uncredentialed adults in our classrooms that we have  
6 currently.

7 10. Teachers need help to obtain their full credentials when they are being paid very  
8 little money, and the state should provide scholarships for teachers working towards their  
9 credentials. It costs about \$250 for each test that a teacher must take in a series of tests that are  
10 required to obtain you full credentials. Additionally teachers must pay for their course work.  
11 Assistance from the state would encourage more teachers to obtain their full credential and to  
12 continue with their professional development. Because Teach For America is an AmeriCorps  
13 program, I had assistance from the federal government to pay for my classes and that has helped  
14 me a lot. Although it has been very difficult taking classes and teaching at the same time, I really  
15 find that the whole process of obtaining my credentials has been incredibly rewarding, and many  
16 days I will take what I have learned from a class the night before and apply it in my classroom  
17 the very next day. Because I am receiving training and mentoring through my schooling I feel  
18 that my teaching has improved, and the students get the benefit of what I am learning.

19 11. At Edison-McNair we do not have enough teachers who speak Spanish, and the  
20 majority of students at our school are ELL students. During the 2000-2001 school year I was the  
21 only teacher for the seventh and eighth grade that speaks Spanish. None of the sixth grade  
22 teachers spoke Spanish. In fifth grade there were only two teachers who were bilingual. There  
23 were only two teachers in the fourth grade at Edison-McNair who were bilingual. This is  
24 challenging, when about 75% of our students have Spanish as their first language. In my seventh  
25 grade home room during the 2000-2001 school year five of my students spoke no English at all,  
26 and a few others spoke very little English. When I gave assignments, I would explain them in  
27 English and Spanish. I would also pair students who could not speak very well with students  
28 who were more or less bilingual. The buddy system was okay, but translating is a skill and

1 young students often have difficulty translating between languages. The students may not know  
2 what some words in English are in Spanish or vice versa. It can be very difficult for the students  
3 who are attempting to translate and for the students who do not speak English. I would also  
4 translate the worksheets or assignments into Spanish whenever I had time. The children in my  
5 class, I believe, were fortunate because I could speak to them in both Spanish and English, but  
6 there are students in every grade level and almost every class at Edison-McNair who do not  
7 speak English. There is often no one in the class with them to assist these students. Basically  
8 this means that the teacher and the student are never able to connect, and the students learn  
9 second hand from their peers. As a part of all teachers' credentialing process in California,  
10 Spanish classes should be required. It would be wonderful if the state also provided free Spanish  
11 classes for teachers during the school year. I believe that would assist many of the teachers at our  
12 school with just understanding the basics enough so they can communicate a little bit with both  
13 the parents and students.

14       12. I speak Spanish, and because there are not enough staff members who speak  
15 Spanish at my school I am often called on in my spare time to translate for parent teacher  
16 conferences for other teachers. It is truly a problem that the parents are unable to communicate  
17 with the staff at the school. It really makes it difficult to have parent involvement and for the  
18 parents to be able to participate in their children's education. Additionally, it is difficult for the  
19 parents to be able to effectively voice their concerns when there is such a huge language barrier.

20       13. At Edison-McNair our biggest struggles are because we don't have enough human  
21 resources. For example, we do not have a librarian, we do not have a nurse, there are no staff  
22 counselors, and we have no one hired to cover lunch or yard duty. There is no one who can  
23 cover the computer lab after-school hours, and so the children don't have anywhere after-school  
24 to work on their homework assignments that may require a computer. There are no tutors or  
25 classroom aides. We especially need tutors and classroom aides in bilingual classrooms where it  
26 is difficult for some students to keep up when a class is being conducted all in English.

27       14. During the past two years that I have taught at Edison-McNair we have not had a  
28 library or a librarian at the school. We have a room with some books. However, the students do

1 not really have access to that room and cannot check out books because we do not have a  
2 librarian to staff that room. As a result, it is up to the classroom teacher to provide outside  
3 reading resources for the students. Usually, teachers will take money from their own pockets to  
4 buy books for the children for the classroom for things like book reports and other reading and  
5 research projects. It is really sad that we do not have a library for the students. The school just  
6 recently hired a technology assistant sometime during 2001. This person just recently won some  
7 funding to help pay for a library, and so I am hopeful that in the 2001-2002 school year we will  
8 have a library for the children.

9 15. In my writing class in the 2000-2001 school year I had enough writing resource  
10 books for a particular class, but I had three classes each day and so I did not have the 90-some  
11 books that would have been needed to allow the children to actually take their books home with  
12 them each day to do their homework and to study. Also, I know from other teachers that there  
13 are not enough books for the students in certain subjects and certain grade levels. Additionally, I  
14 know that the children are not generally allowed to bring books home with them to study and for  
15 homework. It makes me very sad that each child does not have a book that is each child's very  
16 own. Growing up I had a book to take home in each of my classes, and I believe that the children  
17 at Edison-McNair should also be able to take their books home. Unfortunately, at Edison-  
18 McNair we do not have a staff person to coordinate our book supply and often teachers do not  
19 have time to keep track of the books that they send home with children. This means that teachers  
20 are often forced to make the hard choice of not allowing books to be sent home, because they just  
21 don't have time to keep track of the books. If we had a book coordinator and a book check-out  
22 system, I believe that this problem would likely be solved.

23 16. I also do not feel that we have adequate resources to teach ELL learners. For  
24 example, there is not a comprehensive program with corresponding reading and writing resources  
25 for ELL children. In my reading classes I had an English literature book that was very advanced  
26 and there is no way that a child who does not speak any English could follow it. I also had a very  
27 basic book that taught the children to say things like how are you or I am fine. We need a  
28 comprehensive program like we have for children who are learning a foreign language. It is

1 basically impossible to teach children with the same instructional materials in an English class  
2 where you have one child who is a native English speaker and another who does not speak any  
3 English at all. A comprehensive program would have different levels, like I, II, and III and  
4 corresponding materials and resources that would go along with those levels. Our current  
5 program and resources are not serving the children's needs. Schools also need a strict and regular  
6 assessment process to ensure that the children are progressing. Again, there really is not a  
7 system in place to address the needs of these students. Schools need resources geared to serve  
8 this student population, including adequate instructional materials and teachers who are trained  
9 and qualified to teach ELL students.

10 17. During the 2000-2001 and 1999-2000 school years, I was concerned that there  
11 was not enough funding for basic supplies, and I often had to pay for supplies for myself because  
12 I was told money for items such as overhead projector light bulbs, colored pencils, pens, and  
13 pencils was not available. This year the school hired a business manager, and I believe that  
14 things are changing for the better. Already, I have been asked what supplies I need for the school  
15 year that will start in the fall of 2001. This is a huge improvement.

16 18. At Edison-McNair the main school building does not have any air conditioning.  
17 In the spring and summer months, at least 20 to 30 school days out of each year, it is very  
18 difficult to teach because the classrooms get too hot. I open the windows in my classroom and  
19 the doors so that the children and I are more comfortable, and many teachers have paid for their  
20 own fans so that the classroom temperature is more tolerable. Particularly after the children  
21 return from PE or during the afternoon it is very difficult for the children to concentrate in the  
22 heat. I have a water fountain in my classroom and I tell the children to bring in water when it  
23 gets hot, but we really need air conditioning in our classrooms.

24 19. The heating system at Edison-McNair does not function properly. For example,  
25 during the 2000-2001 school year the heater in the classroom next door to mine was blowing  
26 out cold air and all the kids had to wear their winter coats during the cold months of the school  
27 year. Teachers call the office constantly because one half of the school will be freezing cold  
28 while the other half is stifling hot. On days when the school was really cold, mainly during

1 November, December, January, and February, I would try to bring in hot chocolate for the  
2 children out of my own money so that at least the children would have something warm in their  
3 hands. I would say between 20 or 30 days during the school year the classroom was  
4 uncomfortably cold and so it was very difficult for the children to learn. In my teacher  
5 credentialing classes, we are taught that it is really important to create an environment that is  
6 comfortable for the children. In order to provide this type of environment the children need to be  
7 both emotionally and physically comfortable.

8 20. During the 2000-2001 school year I saw mice running through my classroom on a  
9 fairly regular basis. During the last week of school the custodians placed a mouse trap in my  
10 room, one of the sticky ones, and a child in my class looked underneath the cabinet because the  
11 child heard a whining noise. A mouse was stuck in the trap but it was still alive. It was horrible.  
12 When something like this happens the children get all worked up and it clearly disrupts  
13 instructional time. Additionally, almost every weekend when I would come in by myself to do  
14 work I would see a mouse run across the floor. The custodial staff at Edison-McNair are  
15 amazing and they work very hard, but they cannot do it all. There are not enough custodial staff  
16 to do the incredibly hard job of ensuring that the school is clean and taken care of. They need  
17 help.

18 21. The blinds and windows in my classroom are covered in dirt. I believe that we  
19 need more custodial staff at the school. The custodial staff we have are incredible and hard  
20 working but they need help. There are not enough people to take care of the many needs at  
21 Edison-McNair. For example, during our spring break the teachers were asked to take the  
22 posters and charts off their walls and move things off the counters so that the rooms could be  
23 thoroughly cleaned. However, when we came back from break the thorough cleaning had not  
24 been done. The reason it was not done was because the school could not find the funding to pay  
25 the custodians overtime to take care of this job. It is very important that the children come to  
26 school to a clean environment, and our custodial staff needs help in order to really keep the  
27 school clean.

28 22. There are not enough bathrooms at Edison-McNair. There are two boys



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bathrooms and two girls bathrooms with two stalls in each bathroom for a student population of approximately 500 children. That is not enough bathrooms for so many students.

23. This year our book room that is supposed to be our library was used during two periods as a classroom, and there are two world language teachers who do not have a classroom of their own to teach in because of overcrowding. These two teachers must cart around their books from class to class. It is hard for both the teacher who must share that teacher's classroom and for the teacher who must cart his or her supplies around during the school day. When my class is being used by another teacher I cannot be in it to set up for my next class, and I know it is difficult for the world language teachers to have to cart their supplies around.

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 25 day of July, 2001 in ~~Wichita, KS~~ IL.

*Stephanie Cremen*  
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