

Declaration of Mario Becerra

I, Mario Becerra, 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. This is my first year teaching. Fremont High School is a multitrack year-round school, and I teach students in the B track, which began on July 2nd, 2001. I teach English to 10th grade students, and literacy to 9th grade students. I have an emergency teaching certificate.

3. None of the students in either of my two literacy classes has books, even though we are in the seventh week of school. Each student in the literacy curriculum should have a language textbook and a workbook for each unit of the three-unit literacy curriculum. I have only one copy of the teacher's manual and one copy of the workbook for the first unit, so I have to photocopy and distribute each assignment for each student in each of my classes out of the teacher's manual. I spend my entire conference period every day photocopying, and I have to stay at school photocopying until 7:30 or 8:00 one or two nights a week as well. I have books for the second and third units of the literacy curriculum, but I cannot use them because my students have not yet learned the first unit. There are four other literacy teachers on track "B" at Fremont High School, and none of them have received the language curriculum for the 2001-2002 school year either.

4. I have no literature in my classroom, because the school administration refuses to order high-interest, low-level books. Low-level books are the only books that are appropriate for my students, who for the most part, read at first and second grade levels. Without books, my students cannot practice what they have learned. I have asked the literacy coordinator at the school for books several times, and she has asked the principal, the assistant principal for English and Literacy, and the Title I coordinator for books for my classroom. I requested low-level books every day for two weeks straight in July of 2001. The school still has not provided me with any books at all.

5. The school refuses to provide my students with "accelerated reader," which is a computer program designed to help students become literate. The school has the software and

1 the companion books, and I have a computer in my classroom that is capable of running the
2 software, but the school will not allow me to access it for my students. I have repeatedly asked
3 the Title I coordinator to make the software available to my class, but she has refused.

4 6. My literacy students are frustrated because they don't have the materials they need
5 to learn. One of my students gets so frustrated trying to learn to read without a book that he
6 punches the walls in the classroom and at home. On Monday, August 20th, that student came to
7 school with swollen and scabbed hands because he had punched the walls at home over the
8 weekend until his knuckles bled.

9 7. For the first month of school, I had 47 students in my 10th grade English class.
10 Having so many students made it impossible for me to separate the students into groups for
11 grammar exercises because I could not give enough attention to each group. I know that small
12 group work can be effective in classes with fewer students because the same exercise has been
13 effective in my 9th grade literacy classes, which have about 25 students each.

14 8. For the first six weeks of school there were large holes in my ceiling where ceiling
15 tiles used to be. My students and I could see pipes and plumbing fixtures in the space between the
16 roof and the ceiling. The school finally fixed the holes last week.

17 9. Overcrowding at Fremont is so bad that students are forced to choose between
18 going to class and going to the bathroom. The crowds in the hallway are so thick that it takes
19 students the entire five-minute passing period to go from one class to the next, leaving no time to
20 visit the bathroom. Students who are late to class are not allowed into the classroom. Instead
21 they sit in the "tardy room," a room designated for students who were late to class, for the entire
22 period. My students miss class frequently because using the bathroom during the passing period
23 makes them late to class. This week, two of my literacy students missed an exam in my first
24 period class because using the bathroom made them late, and they spent first period in the tardy
25 room.

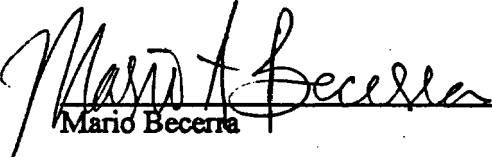
26 10. My students do not have a chance to learn the full curriculum because of the
27 multitrack schedule. Classes are never in session for longer than two months, and my students are
28 likely to forget what they have learned over the break, making it impossible for me to build on

1 what the students have already learned. For example, my English class studied poetry last session,
2 which is necessary in order to understand Shakespeare plays, which I intend to teach next
3 semester. I expect that my students will have forgotten what they learned in the poetry session by
4 next session, so they will not be able to understand Shakespeare.

5 11. Fremont High School is so crowded that the school has to promote students who
6 are not ready for the next grade because there is not room to hold students back. When students
7 fail regular classes that are required to pass on to the next grade, they are placed in inter-session
8 classes, which are six weeks long, and attempt to cover the same material that students should
9 have learned in a semester. Students pass the inter-session classes and move on to the next grade
10 regardless of their performance, because there is not enough room at the school to keep them in
11 the same grade for another year.

12 12. Two other schools situated very close to Fremont High School are on regular
13 semester schedules, and I believe that they have less than 1,500 students each. The fact that
14 Fremont High School is overcrowded and multitrack makes the faculty and students at Fremont
15 feel like Fremont High school is a "throw-away" school for students that nobody cares about.

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 27th day of August, 2001 in Los
18 Angeles, California.

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