

Declaration of Joel Vaca

I, Joel Vaca, 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 teaching math at Fremont High School in Los Angeles, California, for almost two full years. I began teaching in the middle of the 1999-2000 school year after I graduated college in December 1999. I have an emergency teaching certificate.

3. When the current school year began, I had close to 50 students on my initial roster in my algebra II classes during period 1 and period 4. Those classes have both trickled down to about 46 students in each class now, but there are only 36 chairs with desks in my classroom. Several students sit at my desk, which I have moved to the back of the classroom. In addition, I have had to bring 2 tables and about 9 chairs in from other rooms at the school. Even with the extra tables and chairs, some students have to stand and take notes on the tops of bookshelves or sit on other students' desks. It is nerve racking to say the least, and also tiring, to have more students than desks in my class. The problem has gotten so bad that I pray for days when not all my students will show up. I have asked my department co-chair for more seats, but the co-chair told me that if I got more seats in my classroom, I would be assigned more students.

4. The overcrowding in my classroom makes it difficult to work with students one-on-one or separate them into groups to do exercises. Also, because I have too many students, it is impossible to grade and correct all of the problem sets that I assign as homework. I assign about 15 math problems per day, but I only have time to grade about 3 or 4 problems per student per week.

5. As of the beginning of September, I still did not have enough books for my algebra I students, even though the school year started on July 2. I had only one classroom set of books for two classes of students, so the students could not take the books home for homework. Because students could not take the books home, I had to copy the homework assignments out of a book from the classroom set. My department chair told me the school ordered books, but not enough, and that the newer teachers need to receive their books first so I had to wait (even

1 though I have not yet had two full years of teaching experience myself).

2 6. During the 2000-2001 school year, I had to wait about six weeks before I received
3 books for my 12th grade AP calculus students. Even then, we only received the books as a
4 donation from a magnet program at Fremont; Fremont had not purchased the books for us.
5 Before the books arrived, the school didn't provide me with even one calculus book to use to
6 make photocopies for my students; I had to teach from old math books that I used in college.
7 Students copied the problems I wrote on the chalkboard and took their notes home as their only
8 reference source for their homework. But it is essential for students to have math books that they
9 can take home so that they can re-read the lessons if their class notes are unclear. During the first
10 six weeks of school, my students frequently asked me when and if they were going to get books.

11 7. The students in my algebra II class should have scientific calculators, but the
12 school refuses to provide them. Because the school won't provide scientific calculators, I have
13 had to teach lower-level math and simplify the calculations so that they can be done without
14 scientific calculators.

15 8. When I started teaching at Fremont in January 2000, I replaced an English teacher
16 who had been teaching my students' math classes. Before that English teacher, my students had
17 had different substitutes teaching their class. The students only had four months of the school
18 year left with me as their permanent teacher, before then I believe they had had no permanent
19 teacher.

20 9. There is only one photocopy machine at Fremont High school that teachers can
21 use themselves, but it is difficult to access it because so many teachers need to use it. In order to
22 make copies on the self-service machine, I have to be the first person in the library when it opens
23 at 7:00 AM.. I cannot rely on the self-service copy machine because it is almost always broken.
24 The copy machine breaks down at least once every day, and sometimes it is out of order for up to
25 three weeks at a time. Because the self-service machine is almost always broken, I have to ask
26 the staff at the Title I office or the bilingual education office to make copies for me. However,
27 those offices take several days to fulfill copy requests. I once waited more than 8 days for 150
28 copies of a one-page document. Having to wait so long for copies makes it impossible for me to

1 change my lesson plans and keep pace with my students' learning.

2 10. I have seen live rats and their droppings in my classroom. Since the beginning of
3 the 2001-2002 school year, I have had to clean up rat feces in my classroom about once a week. I
4 have also had to play what I call "roach hockey" already twice this school year.

5 11. Many of the ceiling tiles at Fremont High are missing, and several ceiling tiles have
6 fallen down while classes have been in session. One day when students were attending P.E. class
7 in the gym, a tile fell from the ceiling, which is over 30 feet high.

8 12. The bathrooms at Fremont High the worst smelling bathrooms I've been in, and
9 I've been in a lot of bathrooms. I have been in the students' bathrooms several times this year,
10 and each time I have noticed that there was no soap, and that toilet paper was strewn everywhere.
11 Some stalls have no doors on them. There are not enough bathrooms for all the students at
12 Fremont High, especially since many of the bathrooms are locked. Because we only have one or
13 two bathrooms open during lunch and nutrition, it is very unrealistic for teachers to require
14 students to go to the bathroom during lunch and nutrition, so we lose instructional time while
15 students are using the bathroom when they should be in class. The bathrooms for the P.E. field
16 are seldom open, so students in P.E. often urinate outside.

17 13. Fremont High is a multitrack year-round school, and I teach on track C. There are
18 three tracks at the school, and at any given time two of the three tracks are in session, and the
19 third track is on vacation. The school is always occupied by students. Also, the multitrack
20 schedule makes it hard for me to build on what my students already know because my students
21 often forget what they have learned during the long vacation they take in between their first and
22 second semesters. Students on the A and C tracks have two-month breaks in between their first
23 and second semesters, and another two-month break during the summer. This problem is even
24 worse for students on B track, who take a two-month vacation right in the middle of each
25 semester, and have no vacation during the summer. Finally, the multitrack year-round system
26 makes it impossible to do major cleaning or building maintenance because students are always
27 occupying the buildings.

28 14. I know from personal experience as a student that the multitrack system is a

1 serious problem for students. I went to school on a multitrack calendar when I went to Edison
2 Middle School, which is one of the feeder middle schools for Fremont High School. But I was
3 glad to get out of the multitrack system when I was recruited to a magnet high school. I was on
4 the B track when I went to Edison, and that track is the worst because students have no vacation
5 between semesters of even school years. We would finish one school year and the next week
6 we'd already be in a new grade, which made no sense. The multitrack system just affects the
7 whole school morale by cutting down on tradition and school unity by forming divisions between
8 students who want to be on particular tracks so they can have opportunities not offered on other
9 tracks at the school.

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11 I declare under penalty of perjury of the laws of the State of California and the United
12 States that the foregoing is true and correct. Executed this 27th day of September, 2001 in Los
13 Angeles, California.

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