



1 contributes to the feeling many of our students have that nobody cares about them and nobody takes  
2 their education seriously. Students feel alienated from school, as a result.

3 4. There is a district-wide shortage of substitute teachers. Teachers at the school have to  
4 give up one conference period per week, on average, to fill in for absent teachers' classes when no  
5 substitutes come to campus to take the absent teachers' places. Some weeks I have gone with no  
6 conference period at all. This limits the time that should be spent on lesson plans and meeting with  
7 parents and creates a high level of demoralization among teachers.

8 5. There is high teacher turnover at Fremont, with approximately half of the teachers  
9 staying at the school for fewer than five years. The turnover is partly due to the fact that the new  
10 teachers get the toughest conditions; they must rove, they get the worst classrooms, they deal with  
11 the most overcrowded classes, and they do not get sufficient support from the school. These  
12 conditions contribute to teacher burnout and make it more likely that new teachers will transfer out  
13 of Fremont or quit teaching altogether. The turnover is also exacerbated by the low morale among  
14 staff. Because of the turnover, students' needs are not met as well as they could be. Turnover  
15 undermines attempts at progressive change at the school. It is difficult to sustain new reforms at the  
16 school because it takes time to get buy-in from the staff and to design reforms; within a few years,  
17 many of the teachers who started a particular reform are gone, so the reform effort falls apart.

18 6. Fremont High School is severely overcrowded. Fremont is known to be the smallest  
19 urban high school campus in the Bay Area, and possibly in Northern California. It was originally  
20 designed for approximately 1300 students, but there are approximately 2300 students attending the  
21 school. The overcrowding creates a sense of chaos, tension, and dysfunction at the school.

22 7. One result of the overcrowding is that, even with the 35 or 40 portable classrooms at  
23 the school, there are still not enough classrooms for each teacher to have his or her own room. As a  
24 result, some teachers must be "roving teachers," teaching classes in other teachers' classrooms when

1 they are not in use and using the cafeteria or library for their conference periods. Last year, there  
2 were approximately three rovers, and before that there were five or more rovers each year since the  
3 school added ninth grade in September, 1997. (Prior to that, the school included only grades ten,  
4 eleven, and twelve.) Roving has a negative impact on the teachers who constantly have to switch  
5 classrooms. The roving teachers have to carry all their materials with them from class to class,  
6 limiting the amount of materials they can use. Science teachers, for example, have to carry around  
7 all of their science equipment on carts that they push from class to class. It is also a drain on the  
8 rovers' energy to have to set up various classrooms several times a day and to have no place to store  
9 materials. Some roving teachers, for example, teach in five different classrooms in one day.

10 8. Roving also affects the teachers who give up their classrooms during their conference  
11 periods so that rovers can teach. These teachers cannot meet with students, set up their rooms, or  
12 grade papers in their classrooms while rovers are using the classrooms. As a result, the teachers are  
13 limited in what they can provide their students because they have less time to plan lessons. Even  
14 when teachers stay in their classrooms while the rovers teach, the teachers cannot get as much work  
15 done. Two years ago, a roving class used my classroom for two thirds of the year, so I know how  
16 distracting and disruptive it can be to spend your conference period in a classroom where another  
17 class is being held.

18 9. Roving also diminishes the quality of teaching students receive. Each period, when a  
19 roving teacher switches rooms, he or she must take up instructional time to set up the class. I saw  
20 this happen regularly two years ago when an English teacher shared my classroom. The roving  
21 teachers are sometimes late to class because they have only five minutes in between classes to pack  
22 up their materials from the previous class and walk to their next class; as a result, students  
23 sometimes have to wait outside a locked classroom until the roving teacher shows up to let them in.  
24 Roving robs students of the normal experience of science and art classes, in particular, since those

1 classes are based on hands-on experiences; when those classes have to rove, they have fewer  
2 materials to work with and learn from.

3 10. Another result of the overcrowding is that many individual classes are usually  
4 overcrowded at the beginning of the year. Typically, classes will have rosters showing 40 or 50  
5 students in one class, and although usually not all listed students show up, the contractual class size  
6 limits are very often exceeded until the district balances the classes after the first few weeks of  
7 school. Teachers do a "body count" for the first few weeks of school to keep the administration  
8 informed of the number of students in the class, but the administration often keeps sending new  
9 students into these already overcrowded classes. Teachers battle to get the numbers of students  
10 reduced to the contractual limit, but are not always successful. After four to six weeks of  
11 overcrowded conditions and the uncertainty of not knowing which students are going to remain in  
12 the class for the remainder of the year, most class lists are finalized. Every year, this requires  
13 switching at least one teacher to a totally different class or even a different department, for example  
14 from English to social studies.

15 11. Our teaching contract recognizes that it may take up to ten days to balance classes,  
16 but I have never seen this deadline met. This contractual violation has become so flagrant and  
17 commonplace that the District is trying to get the union to agree to an arrangement under which  
18 teachers would be paid a pro-rated amount of their salaries for each student over the class size limit  
19 and for each day of the violation. Many teachers are appalled at the suggestion that we would accept  
20 permanently overcrowded classes for a little extra pay. Yet that is being proposed as the only  
21 "solution" to the problem.

22 12. As the site representative for my union, I hear teachers complain about the class sizes.  
23 One teacher last year had four (out of five) classes with about 40 students each. Last year, I had a  
24 few classes with more than 32 students for the first several weeks, and even having 32 students in

1 one class is too many. Many students need one-on-one attention because they are not reading at  
2 grade level when they enter Fremont. With so many students in a class, it is very difficult to give  
3 students individual attention; some fall through the cracks as a result and end up dropping out.  
4 When one teacher complained to an administrator about her overcrowded classes last year, she was  
5 told to wait a while and "attrition will take care of it." This confirms a sense among many teachers  
6 at Fremont, including myself, that the district builds an expectation of a high dropout rate into its  
7 planning, creating a self-fulfilling prophecy.

8 13. Sometimes there are not enough desks for all students in a class for the first few  
9 weeks of the school year. Students must sit on counters in the back of the room or stand, or teachers  
10 must borrow chairs from other rooms to accommodate the students. I knew a lot of teachers with  
11 four out of five classes in the beginning of the year that had this problem. Of my five classes, I  
12 typically have two or three classes like this.

13 14. The Chair of the Science Department told me there are very few science classes that  
14 are properly equipped for experiments. They do not have all the materials, supplies, and chemicals  
15 that are needed. None of the four science rooms have proper ventilation or gas burners, and some do  
16 not have sinks. As a result, teachers are limited in their ability to do experiments with their students.

17 15. There is a shortage of textbooks at Fremont. In some electives, the students do not  
18 receive any books at all, such as in the ninth grade Multicultural class. There also are not enough  
19 books in bilingual content areas, like science and social studies. Two years ago, I taught a sheltered  
20 United States History class, with students who were at an intermediate English language level.  
21 Since we do not have U.S. History books in Spanish or history textbooks designed for sheltered  
22 English instruction (i.e., at an appropriate level of English while maintaining content that meets  
23 District- and State-mandated high school social studies content standards), we had to use simplified  
24 books, meant for special education students, even though it was not a special education class. The

1 year before last, one World Cultures teacher told me the class did not have enough books, so each  
2 student did not have his or her own book; as a result, students could not take books out of the class  
3 for homework.

4 16. Temperature regulation in parts of the school is also a problem. Some portables and  
5 some classrooms in the main building have no functioning heaters. Teachers bring in space heaters,  
6 and students wear jackets in class to try to stay warm. A video that students and I made about  
7 conditions at the school shows some students going outside in the winter to warm up because it was  
8 colder inside the building than it was outside. In addition, many classrooms get very hot on warm  
9 days. In my portable classroom, on a typical warm day when it is 80 degrees outside, it gets to be 85  
10 or 90 degrees in my class. Sometimes, the room gets to 95 degrees or above. I know this because I  
11 have a thermometer in my classroom. I would estimate that about one half of the time it is too hot in  
12 my classroom. I have bought four fans with my own money to deal with the heat. On one hot day, I  
13 took my class to the cafeteria because it is cooler in there, but it was really hard to teach in there  
14 because of bad acoustics and people who aren't in my class milling around. On warm days, I must  
15 always keep the door to my classroom open because otherwise the classroom would be unbearable,  
16 but that creates distractions because, with the door open, we can hear a lot of noise from roving  
17 students and people coming onto the campus. Without a doubt, the heat negatively impacts my  
18 teaching, students' learning and all of our abilities to concentrate. Students complain about the heat  
19 often, but I urge them to try to focus on class because we have no choice.

20 17. The students' bathrooms at Fremont are filthy. I have been in the bathroom in the  
21 gym, and there are never any paper towels in there. At least one of the urinals there regularly  
22 overflows and floods the surrounding floor area. Students complain that there is an on-going lack of  
23 toilet paper, soap, and paper towels in the bathrooms, and some leave campus to use the bathrooms  
24 at their homes or elsewhere. Bathrooms are also locked during class, and students have to find a

1 security guard to open the bathrooms for them when they need it. Teachers have complained to the  
2 principal about the condition of the bathrooms, but the conditions have not improved.

3 18. I have seen mice droppings and five or six mice in my classroom in the last couple  
4 years. Occasionally, my classes have been interrupted by an invading mouse; students get excited  
5 and jump onto their seats until I can scare the mouse into running behind a filing cabinet or  
6 bookshelves. I reported the problem to the custodian, who caught one mouse. I heard students in  
7 another portable saw a mouse as well. I have also seen large rats running across our school  
8 courtyard after school.

9 19. Mold is a problem at the school. In the 1999-2000 school year, the floor in one  
10 special education classroom essentially erupted; because of a leaking pipe under the concrete slab,  
11 the floor buckled and mold grew out of it. Mold had been reported in that room for at least two  
12 years prior to the eruption. Even then, and after the teacher in that room called OSHA, it took more  
13 than a year for the school to relocate her office and students to another room and to begin to safely  
14 address the mold and the damaged floor.

15 20. There was no functioning library, and no access to its computer lab, for most of the  
16 past year. The library finally opened in the spring, after renovations were completed.

17 21. In another room this past year, there were exposed wires and one student received an  
18 electric shock.

19 22. I heard that in the main building, either during the 1999-2000 school year or in early  
20 2000-2001, there was one classroom that had a leaky ceiling; water dripped onto a student.

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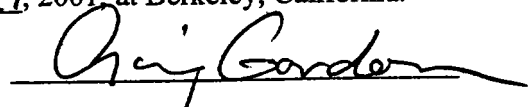
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23. Students talk about how "ghetto" the classrooms at Fremont look because the facilities at Fremont are substandard. For example, my classroom has a twenty-year-old carpet with a rip all the way down the middle of the room that is held together by duct tape.

I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of California that the foregoing is true and correct. Executed on August 29, 2001, at Berkeley, California.



Craig Gordon