

1 **Declaration of Petra Jones**

2 I, Petra Jones, 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 have been a teacher at Gage Middle School in Huntington Park for 15 years. I
6 currently teach eighth grade English and leadership classes. There are severe problems with rats,
7 overcrowding, and facilities at Gage that greatly affect students' ability to learn and teachers'
8 ability to teach.

9 3. There is a terrible rat problem at Gage. We have lost the Internet connections in
10 our far east building because rats have bitten through the cables. The administrator in charge of
11 the plant says the district experts say that we can't get the Internet fixed until the rats have been
12 eliminated. I also know that one of the school secretaries has seen traces of rats on her desk and
13 she told me that a big rat ran over her foot. The pest people came in and put a couple of sticky
14 traps out, but based on the descriptions of the secretary those traps aren't going to do much ---
15 given the size of the rats compared to the size of the traps they might as well have put down
16 scotch tape.

17 4. The overcrowding problem at Gage is unbearable. We have approximately 300
18 more students this year than we did last year. We are a multi-track school and we are bursting at
19 the seams.

20 5. The P.E. field at our school was never finished after the school was reconstructed
21 about 10 years ago. What this means is that the students essentially have no outdoor space to play
22 on for their P.E. classes and so they must play in spaces that are close to classrooms where
23 classes are in session. The P.E. teachers have no room to hold their classes and so students are
24 playing games right near classes that are in session. It is extremely noisy and distracting. One
25 teacher, who had her classroom door open to cool down a classroom without air conditioning,
26 kept having to remove a soccer ball from the front of her room because the ball the children in
27 P.E. were using kept entering her room.

28 6. We do not have a student cafeteria, auditorium, or a gym at Gage Middle School

1 because the school had to be reconstructed approximately 10 years ago to create more classroom
2 space. The only place we have for assemblies, dances, and other school-wide functions, the
3 multi-purpose room, is now used as classroom space. Currently, the music classes are being held
4 in the library, and this limits teachers' ability to bring students to the library to do research and
5 other projects. Every available space at Gage is used for classes and that means that children
6 really miss out on other activities that help them learn and keep students in school.

7 7. We have an incredible number of traveling teachers at Gage. Additionally, most
8 of the teachers share their classes with at least one other teacher and so during our conference
9 periods when we are supposed to be preparing for other classes we have no place to go. Our
10 principal is in the process of assigning any empty space in the school to teachers who are on their
11 conference periods but the situation here is just terrible. During my conference period, I sit in the
12 hallway where they sell the dance tickets. Most teachers do not even have a hallway to sit in.
13 When a teacher has to travel that teacher cannot do the same kind of projects with the students
14 that he/she would normally do because the logistics of carrying materials and supplies from place
15 to place and storing things is just impossible to pull off. Teachers cannot provide the type of
16 innovative lessons they want to provide because they spend much of their day moving from place
17 to place. It is just horrid. Also, finding traveling teachers can be very difficult both for the
18 administrative staff and the students. The students get particularly confused because often they
19 are unable to find their teacher at other times during the day when they are not in that teacher's
20 class.

21 8. Multi-tracking is extremely detrimental for the children. In a traditional calendar
22 year there is only one long break, however, multi-track schedule students have one break in
23 between each semester and students backslide each time they go off track. This means that the
24 teachers must review what the students have learned twice a year. Additionally, the day for
25 students is just so much longer to make up for the fact that they are not in school as many days as
26 other students. For middle school students this is difficult. Our day goes from 7:25am-3:13pm.
27 Studies show that for students in middle school and high school the optimum time to be teaching
28 is at about 11am, but yet we keep starting earlier and earlier each year.

1 9. As a result of overcrowding, our intersession (summer school in traditional
2 schools) classes now have to be held after the regular school hours from 3:30-5:45pm. Several
3 years ago, when the school was a little less crowded, our students could take two intersession
4 classes per session to, for example, make up for two classes they had failed. Now these students
5 are only allowed to take one intersession class. There just aren't enough hours in the day. We
6 also have night school and other programs and we can't fit all of these things in one set of
7 buildings.

8 10. Gage is very dirty because it is a large campus with too many people and not
9 enough custodial staff. When there are so many students and so many people using the school all
10 year round, the building never gets a break. With so much foot traffic we need a larger
11 maintenance and custodial staff. Our campus is depressing because it is dirty, there are big black
12 splotches of gum all over, and dirt and trash is everywhere. The carpets in the building aren't
13 getting vacuumed regularly unless the teachers bring in their own vacuum cleaners and do the job
14 themselves. The custodians just can't keep up with it all. Additionally, the paint is peeling off in
15 chunks from the walls in my room, which have not been painted for at least 10 years. It would
16 seem to me that deep cleaning of a cafeteria that serves 2,400 meals twice a day all year round
17 needs to happen more than twice annually -- the number of times it is currently deep-cleaned by
18 the district. Rooms that are in use from 7:25am - 5:30pm or longer, almost every day of the year,
19 need additional attention.

20 11. We don't have enough bathrooms for the students and staff at Gage. The students
21 must stand in long lines to use the bathrooms. There are over 2,400 students at Gage and only 4
22 sets of bathrooms. Again, it is impossible for the custodial staff to keep them properly stocked or
23 clean because there are just too many students and people using them. It is really terrible.

24 12. Gage is so overcrowded that at lunch time students have a difficult time getting
25 their food because the lines are so long. To alleviate some of the congestion, cafeteria staff take
26 a rolling cart with food on it to a different part of the campus so that students have another way
27 to get food. The covered area where the students are supposed to sit during lunch time cannot
28 accommodate all of the students who need to eat at lunch or nutrition and so students sit on the

1 floor or outside.

2 13. Because of the overcrowding and the lack of a P.E. field, the children have
3 nowhere to play during lunch and nutrition. It is really sad. Before the students could play
4 basketball, soccer, or other games, but we only have three basketball hoops and they can't play
5 soccer because if they did they would injure someone -- it is just that crowded. There are
6 students everywhere.

7 14. Currently at Gage, September of 2001, there are six teacher vacancies. Two of the
8 vacancies are in off track positions and the other four are in on track positions. For the most part
9 we try to get off track teachers to fill the vacancies, because then at least the students only have
10 two different teachers in one semester instead of rotating substitutes. This is not ideal because
11 the students have different teachers with different teaching styles and no continuity. We try to
12 make do but the children's education suffers.


13 15. Some of the rooms at Gage do not have any air conditioning at all. For the
14 students and teachers in classes without air conditioning the conditions are just horrible. Most of
15 the classrooms at the school do not have windows that open or maybe there will be a few
16 windows that open, but they are usually high up and so the classes don't get any air movement.
17 The children are just melting. When it is hot and you don't have air conditioning in classes it just
18 really sucks the life out of both the teachers and students. I know because for about seven years
19 the air conditioning did not function regularly in my classroom. The teachers who are currently
20 suffering in classrooms without air conditioning probably experience days with high
21 temperatures and uncomfortable conditions from about March until October.

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23 I declare under penalty of perjury of the laws of the State of California and the United
24 States that the foregoing is true and correct. Executed this 18th day of September, 2001 in Los
25 Huntington Park
Angeles, California.

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Petra Jones