

1 **Declaration of Joshua Pechtalt**

2 I, Joshua Pechtalt, 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 teach social studies on the B track at Manual Arts High School in Los Angeles,
6 where I have taught for 17 years before this one. I most often teach U.S. history and Latin
7 American studies, and I also have taught African American studies, English as a second
8 language, and mural painting.

9 3. Manual Arts operates on a Concept 6 multitrack, year-round schedule.
10 Multitracking is not an education reform; it is just a way of squeezing more kids into an already
11 limited facility. One way to know that multitracking is not an education reform is to recognize
12 that multitracking happens in poor communities and not in more affluent parts of Los Angeles. If
13 multitracking were truly an education reform, it would take place in schools affluent students
14 attend. The multitrack system does not have a positive impact on kids, primarily because schools
15 on multitrack schedules are unable to provide the breadth of an educational program that the
16 schools would otherwise be able to provide if they operated on single tracks. When a school is
17 divided up into tracks, the school is still required to provide a basic academic program on each
18 track. But because the school doesn't have the number of teachers on each track that a school
19 normally would have for an entire school program, the multitrack school is limited in the
20 numbers of electives the school can provide and the school cannot offer the same academically
21 enriched programs across all the tracks. In addition, students and teachers who want to
22 participate in campus sports must come back to campus during their off-track time because the
23 sports seasons aren't on multitrack calendars. It takes what seems like a superhuman effort for a
24 student just to play on a team at Manual Arts because of the way the track schedules conflict with
25 sports seasons. Heaven forbid that a student athlete wants to get a job or take vacation during the
26 student's off-track time because that student must instead come back on campus to play the sport.
27 That's very different from the old traditional way schools operated when I was growing up in Los
28 Angeles public schools, when students took classes during the day and played sports after school.

1 The multitrack schedule also scrambles students' summer time because two of the three tracks in
2 Concept 6 schools operate during the summer months. Kids on these tracks do not have the same
3 opportunities to work or to participate in summer enrichment programs that students who do not
4 go to school during the summer can participate in. It is also hard for teachers to communicate all
5 the course material in the compressed Concept 6 multitrack schedule, according to which we
6 have fewer total school days than traditional calendar schools have, although we have the same
7 or more instructional minutes than these schools have. All of us at Manual Arts face the problem
8 of squeezing a full curriculum into the number of days we're allotted on the Concept 6 calendar.
9 Finally, multitacking taxes schools' already wrung-out facilities. At Manual Arts, running
10 approximately 3000 kids plus the students in the adult school through the relatively small square
11 footage of our high school goes beyond the limits of what the school was built to accommodate.

12 4. Manual Arts is an overcrowded school, and some of the class sizes at Manual Arts
13 are very large. In particular, I know many of the physical education classes are enormous. I
14 believe those classes are so large because of a general lack of concern and respect for physical
15 education. My classes generally are not larger than 30 students because I refuse to keep more
16 kids than about 30 in my classes. But I'm a veteran teacher, so I don't worry that I will get in
17 trouble with the school administration if I send kids back and refuse to take them in my
18 classroom. I know other, more junior, teachers do not feel as secure about their position at the
19 school and I know these beginning teachers very often simply accept in their classes however
20 many students are sent to their classes.

21 5. The notion that the State could not have built more new schools before now to
22 relieve overcrowding is completely flawed. The best argument against that notion is the
23 construction of the new Staples Center in downtown Los Angeles. Within a 14 month period, the
24 City was able to secure prime real estate and build a state of the art center. Obviously, where
25 there's a will, there's a way, but we haven't made the choice to put schools on that priority level.

26 6. Manual Arts has a huge number of emergency credentialed teachers – probably
27 around a third of the teachers at the school work on emergency credentials. I think having good,
28 experienced teachers is a right every kid should have. Poor kids and children of color have as

1 much right to quality teachers as middle class white kids do. But in this State we clearly do not
2 have a marketplace that is attractive enough to bring experienced teachers into the field, and in
3 addition, we're not providing a training mechanism that keeps people from being forced into
4 working before their time. We have such a huge shortage of teachers in this State that virtually
5 anyone who passes the CBEST will get into a classroom, without necessarily having done an
6 apprenticeship first. Of the three tracks at Manual Arts, B track (my track) has the largest
7 number of emergency credentialed teachers. Most veteran teachers want to work on a traditional
8 calendar, so they choose to work on the A track because it is the closest track to a traditional
9 school calendar.

10 7. We often have teacher vacancies while school is in session at Manual Arts. I
11 know the most about the social studies and special education teacher needs at Manual Arts right
12 now because I teach social studies and because, during the past two weeks, I have substituted
13 several times in some of the special education classes during my conference period. Right now,
14 we have a few social studies teacher positions that are unfilled, and I know we just filled a few
15 more social studies teacher positions in the past few weeks. And we have had chronic problems
16 finding credentialed special education teachers in the past few years. When a teaching position is
17 unfilled, sometimes an off-track teacher fills in for the class during the teacher's off-track time.
18 That is the best of a bad scenario because at least the students in the classes for which a
19 permanent teacher has not yet been hired then have one teacher for a continuous period of time.
20 But even in that best of the bad scenario, the off-track teacher eventually has to go back on track
21 and teach his or her own track. So if the school still has not hired a teacher to fill the unfilled
22 position, then the class sees another off-track teacher for the rest of the term, or might instead
23 have a series of substitutes filling in or have teachers like me who teach a class during their
24 conference periods while the teachers are on track. Using a series of substitute teachers to fill a
25 vacant teacher position is the worst of all worlds because really no learning takes place in the
26 classroom when many different teachers come for only a short period of time for each one. The
27 difference between having a teacher permanently assigned to a class and having no teacher
28 assigned to a class is the difference between night and day. Without a teacher permanently

1 assigned to a class, students get no consistent lesson planning and in fact no consistency at all.
2 When a teaching position is vacant, the classroom situation basically becomes one of babysitting,
3 during which the students are not doing any learning. It's a pretty terrible situation.

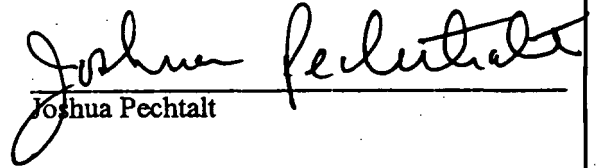
4 8. During the second semester of the 2000-2001 school year on the B track, I
5 substituted in a science class that hadn't had a science teacher in a long, long time. I believe the
6 students had not had a science teacher assigned to their class for the better part of a semester. I
7 was incensed by the situation because the students had had to go for so long without having a
8 teacher permanently assigned to their class. But I'm not a science teacher and I have no science
9 background, so I had to ask the students just to do homework for their other classes during the
10 class time because I didn't have lessons I could teach them.

11 9. In addition to the teacher vacancy problem, we have a substitute shortage at
12 Manual Arts. Very often, when a teacher is absent, no substitute shows up at the school to fill
13 the absence for the day. When that happens, other teachers fill in the class during conference
14 periods. For example, on Friday July 13, 2001, I substituted in an English class for an English
15 teacher who had been absent that day. Fortunately, the teacher left a really detailed lesson plan,
16 so the kids knew exactly what they were supposed to do during that class period, and the class
17 period was not a total waste of time. Students are not always so lucky, though. Whether students
18 have lesson plans to follow when their teachers are absent really depends on the teacher. The
19 less responsible teachers leave only minimal lesson plans or no lesson plans at all. And in
20 classes where no teacher has yet been assigned to the class, then the students' only hope of
21 getting a lesson plan is that the school administration will provide one, which often does not
22 happen.

23 10. I believe that the solutions to the teacher shortage problem in California are more
24 complicated than merely raising teacher salaries. Of course, there's a great deal of truth in my
25 union's position that teachers' pay should be higher. But the underlying problem is that at
26 Manual Arts, and other schools like it, we have working conditions that make teaching the
27 students a really difficult proposition. In order to improve those working conditions, we need to
28 dramatically reduce class size and create much smaller schools where kids are not just

1 warehoused, for just a few examples. In short, we need to create schools in poor communities
2 that are like the schools rich people have. The model for everybody should be what rich parents
3 want for their children.
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5 I declare under penalty of perjury of the laws of the State of California and the United
6 States that the foregoing is true and correct. Executed this 29th day of July, 2001 in Los Angeles,
7 California.

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Joshua Pechtalt