

Declaration of Maria Guadalupe Mendoza

I, Maria Gualdalupe Mendoza, 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 am 18 years old and just graduated from Oxnard High School in June of 2001. I was a student at Oxnard High since the ninth grade, the 1997-1998 school year.

3. I had many classes at Oxnard High in which I did not have a textbook. In my English class of my senior year, during the 2000-2001 school year, I did not have my own book because there was only a class set. We had to pick up the book at the beginning of class and return it at the end of class; it was not easy to check out a book to take it home because all of my teacher's English classes used this book. Since we could not take the book home, we usually just had essays for homework. What was also frustrating about not having our own book in this class was that we had to copy the work down on our own paper. For example, we would copy a whole poem and the questions that we had to answer about the poem, so sometimes I would be late to the class after English because it took a long time to copy everything down. If I didn't finish copying the complete assignment, then I would have to go into class during lunch or after school. Not having my own book and only having a class set to rely on really interrupted my education; instead of learning or studying, I feel like if I spent 80% of the class time copying work or rushing to get the work done, but I was not really learning. In my senior year advanced photography class, during the 2000-2001 school year, my class did not have any books, even though we were supposed to. I feel that I did not learn anything new or different from the first photography class, which I took during my junior year. Since we didn't have books, we pretty much did the same assignments as the beginning photography class did, so it was basically all review for me. For my 11th grade English class, during the 1999-2000 school year, my class had a class set of literature books, but we did not make much use of them because we could only use the books in class. When we did use them and read stories or poems from them, we were always in a hurry because we had to make sure to get through the assignment and put the books back before the end of the class. If each student had his or her own book, we would have

1 been able to analyze the stories and poems, instead of just rushing through them and racing against
2 time. In my 11th grade Spanish 4 class, during the 1999-2000 year, my teacher had to make copies
3 of any work we did because we didn't have our own textbooks. It was frustrating to not have a book
4 and to have to study and work from worksheets all of the time. I really would have learned more
5 with a book because I would have been able to study and analyze the assignments. There is no
6 comparison between a story copied onto a worksheet and a book that has examples, an index, and
7 other information, because worksheets have very limited information. I had this same problem in my
8 tenth and ninth grade interactive math program classes because we did not have any books
9 whatsoever. It was a terrible experience because the only thing we had to work with were worksheets
10 and the notes that we took in class. During the whole class we took notes, so it was hard to think
11 about and process all of the information. With a book, I could have been more involved in my
12 learning; in math it is very important to understand steps and details, but worksheets do not allow
13 for this.

14 4. A lot of books at Oxnard High are also in very bad condition. In my sociology class
15 of my senior year, during the 2000-2001 school year, we had two different editions of the same
16 textbook, so some were new while others were really old. My book was in very bad condition and
17 had the spine of the book falling apart. It was also very confusing because since my book was from
18 1989, it had old information; when we were placed in study groups, students with the new books had
19 updated information that was missing from the old books. It was also confusing because when the
20 teacher told the class to turn to a certain page from the new book, I had to find the page that he was
21 referring to on a different page number in my book. In my sophomore English class, 1998-1999, we
22 had very torn books with missing pages. My book had tape all over the ripped pages, so sometimes
23 when we read in class I would get lost from the rest of the class because some pages were taped in
24 a crooked manner and I had to look for the second half of the sentence that had just been read in
25 class.

26 5. There is a lack of necessary instructional materials and supplies at Oxnard High
27 School. In my English class in 11th grade, during the 1999-2000 year, I had to buy the book, Rain
28 of Gold, for \$15 because the school did not have it. My teacher told the class that there was not

1 enough funding, and if we bought our own book, we would each receive 200 points. At first she told
2 us that we would keep our own book, but then two weeks into the class she told us that we had to
3 donate the books to the school. My parents got upset when I told them and they told me that they
4 preferred me to keep book and to forgo the points. I told my teacher about this and she said it was
5 ok for me to keep the book; at first she told me that she would not be able to give me the 200 points,
6 but she changed her mind later on in the semester and did give me the points for buying it, but I think
7 that the other students did have to donate the book to have the points. Also, I had to buy my own
8 supplies and materials in my advanced photography class during my senior year. I bought my own
9 film, processing paper, and chemicals for over \$150.00. We each bought supplies for the whole class
10 to use; if you didn't bring the supplies the teacher would reduce your points, so it would affect your
11 grades. I come from a low-income family so it was really hard for me to spend this amount of
12 money, but I needed an elective class to graduate, so I really had no choice. In my ceramics class
13 of my senior year we used clay that was old and moldy. I always had doubts about whether it was
14 safe to use it because the clay had greenish blue and white mold all over. Toward the end of the
15 semester we ran really low on clay so we had to ration it out. We also ran out of glaze in the middle
16 of the semester, so it didn't even seem like a real ceramics class.

17 6. Oxnard High School is also too crowded. The school has a lot of portable
18 classrooms because there are not enough regular classrooms to accommodate all of the students. My
19 Spanish 5 honors class during my senior year, 2000-2001, was in regular classroom building, but
20 after two weeks, the class was transferred to a portable because our classroom space was needed for
21 another class. This interrupted our class schedule because we had to transfer and accommodate
22 ourselves in a different classroom and area of the school. My sophomore English class, during the
23 1998-1999 school year, was held in a bungalow very close by the P.E. area. We constantly heard
24 yelling, laughter, running, and other noises from the P.E. classes, so it was very hard to concentrate.
25 We could not even close the doors to shut out some of the noise because then the classroom would
26 get too hot, so the teacher would sometimes go outside and tell the kids to be quiet, but that did not
27 really help. My ceramics classes of my senior year was too crowded with over 40 students, so it was
28 hard to work productively because there was not enough room for everyone. We always bumped

1 into each other and had to take turns to use materials and supplies. There were also more than 40
2 students in my 12th grade Spanish class; it was sometimes hard to pay attention because there were
3 a lot of distractions. I know that the school was built for a capacity of 2,500 students because it said
4 so in the school newsletter, but there are over 3,000 students. The halls are always extremely
5 crowded during passing periods; I think this causes a real hazard because there is always a lot of
6 pushing through the crowds. This is especially true for the stairs because they are really narrow;
7 when I had to go up or down the stairs, I would just wait for the stampede to be over because I didn't
8 want to get shoved around, but then I would be late for class. It was so crowded and hectic that
9 sometimes people would fall; my sister was once in the middle of the rush and fell and hurt her knee.

10 7. Another problem of overcrowding is that there are not enough busses for students
11 who need to be bussed to and from school. Because there were not enough busses, students would
12 literally run to the bus as soon as the bell rang after school. When the bus got full, we had to wait
13 outside of the school for about 45 until the bus came back from the first round. For the three years
14 that I took the bus at Oxnard High, there were always three students per seat on the bus. It was very
15 uncomfortable having three students per seat; we also did not have seatbelt. I sometimes thought
16 about what would happen if we got into an accident because the bus was so crowded. Once on the
17 way to school, a car almost ran into the bus so the bus had to swerve, and all of the students slid
18 around their seats and had to hold on really tight; this was a very scary experience.

19 8. Air conditioning is another big problem at Oxnard High School. In my 12th grade
20 Spanish class the air conditioning rarely worked, so it was always so hot that it seemed as if it was
21 90 degrees inside the classroom. I remember that I would sweat sometimes and that others would
22 put their heads down on the desk because of the heat. I also noticed that the teacher had to put out
23 extra energy while teaching so that we would wake up and not think about the heat. My interactive
24 math class during my junior year was also very hot. The teacher brought a fan into class and we
25 would fan ourselves with paper, but this didn't really help. It was very hard to concentrate because
26 we got exhausted from the heat and stuffiness. This was the exact same situation in my 10th grade
27 science classes because we didn't have air conditioning in there either. Students would fold paper
28 and make little fans for themselves and would spend a lot of class time just fanning themselves. It

1 was even worse when it came close to summer because then it felt like we were actually outside in
2 the sun. My teacher from my 10th grade English class brought in about three fans to help keep us
3 cool, but they just circulated the warm air.

4 9. In my 12th grade Spanish class it was also very hard to concentrate because the lights
5 went out about once a week, so it was hard for me to see. I need bright light to study, but when the
6 lights went out the classroom got very dark, and then my eyes would start closing. I don't think that
7 any student should have to be in a classroom trying to learn without proper light.

8 10. During 12th grade I saw a rat run across the classroom of an English class for
9 which I was a student aide. Also, in my 11th grade economics class there was a terrible rat problem.
10 During the beginning of the semester we constantly noticed a really bad smell, so we often
11 complained to the teacher about it. After about two months, the smell got so bad that students often
12 got up in the middle of the class and went outside because they felt sick from the smell. The smell
13 made me feel so grossed out that during class I put my hand over my nose. The teacher could not
14 stand the smell either, so a couple of times she taught the class outside. After a while, some people
15 finally came in to take care of the smell and took out a dead and rotting rat from the classroom.

16 11. There are about eight bathrooms for girls at Oxnard High, but only three of them are
17 ever open. There was usually no soap, toilet paper, or paper towels. There are more than 3,000 kids
18 at Oxnard High, of which about half are girls, so three bathrooms are not enough for all the girls at
19 the school. There were always long lines to use the bathroom, so we had to wait about five to ten
20 minutes every time we wanted to use the bathroom during lunch or passing periods. I think it is
21 ridiculous that the school did have an adequate number of bathrooms, but locked most of them. Even
22 the ones that were kept open were not too accessible because they were in buildings for which you
23 needed to have a specific pass to access. For example, if I went to the bathroom during class time,
24 and saw that there was no toilet paper or that there was a long line, I wouldn't be able to go to
25 another bathroom that was in another building because if I didn't have a pass from my teacher that
26 said I had permission to go into that specific building, then the guard would not let me in. I would
27 also get really angry because the bathrooms were used as storage rooms instead of for their intended
28 use. When I was in the 11th grade the administrators opened up a bathroom that had been kept

1 locked since my 9th grade. When they opened it, they found a lot of dictionaries that had never been
2 used; I remember that an administrator made a comment about how they found the dictionaries they
3 had looked for for a long time.

4 12. There are also not enough counselors for the amount of students at Oxnard High.
5 There are only about four to five counselors and more than 3,000 students. It was always a big
6 hassle at the beginning of the semester because there were always errors in schedules, and we had
7 to spend about the first week of classes waiting in line to see a counselor. Once, I had to wait in line
8 for six hours in one week to see a counselor. During this week I always missed about two classes
9 per day because I was waiting in line. When I finally got to see him, I told him that I wanted to talk
10 about the courses that I needed to get into college, but he told me he was too busy and that he had
11 too many students in line to work with. It wasn't until I yelled at him and told him how long I waited
12 in line that he changed my classes. From then on, if there was a long line I would bring my parents
13 to the office and they would let me go to the front of line. It made me so upset that we missed the
14 first week of classes due to administrative short-comings that I started telling other students to bring
15 their parents so that the counselors would listen to them. The counselors were always so overworked
16 that they couldn't even talk to students; they were always busy and stressed out.

17
18 I declare under penalty of perjury of the laws of the State of California and the United States
19 that the foregoing is true and correct. Executed this 8 day of August, 2001 in Oxnard,
20 California.

21
22 
23 Maria G. Mendoza
24
25
26
27
28