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DECLARATION OF MELISSA MARIZETTE

I, MELISSA MARIZETTE, hereby declare:

1. I make this declaration based on my personal knowledge, and if called to testify I could and would do so competently as follows:

2. This past year, my son Charles Anderson was in the fourth grade and my daughter Clarice Anderson was in the third grade at Whittier Elementary School in Oakland, California. I also have two other children, Joshua Choy (who just completed 9th grade at Oakland High School) and Jessica LaRocque (who just completed 7th grade at Roosevelt Middle School in Oakland) who attended Whittier in the past. I spend a lot of time at Whittier. During the school year, when I drop my children off at school (three times a week), I often go inside and speak to teachers and administrators. I also volunteer in classrooms there occasionally, and I was part of a committee that met this year to discuss Whittier's involvement in the Immediate Intervention/Underperforming Schools Program ("II/USP").

3. Because Whittier is overcrowded, some classes are held in rooms that were not meant to be classrooms. This past year, for example, one class was held in a room to the side of the cafeteria that used to be a teacher lounge, and another was held in the former speech therapy room. I had the opportunity to see each of these classrooms once when I was looking for a particular staff person to discuss an incident involving another student's harassment of my daughter. These rooms are in the basement, have no windows, and are too small for the number of students who were in the classes. The desks were cramped together, and there was very little room for the students to move around and interact with each other in class. Having worked as a literacy tutor in Oakland schools for approximately 5 years, I know what types of classroom configurations are conducive to particular learning activities. It is my opinion that the small size of the rooms limits the types of activities teachers in those rooms can assign. For example, there is not enough space for the students

1 to work in small groups. Similarly, another class was held in a very small room off of the
2 auditorium. I have been in this room because it is the room we use as day care when we have parent
3 meetings in the auditorium. There is room to move around the edge of the desks, but that is about it.
4 In addition to my own experiences as a literacy tutor, I know that these small classrooms negatively
5 impact learning because other teachers at the school have told me that these small classes are
6 examples of the barriers to learning that exist at Whittier.

7 4. Another way in which the school deals with overcrowding is by holding classes in
8 portables on the yard. This past year, Charles' class met in a portable. In the summer months
9 (August, September, April, May, and June), the temperature in the portables becomes unbearably
10 hot. This year, Charles complained to me that when it got hot, he had a hard time concentrating and
11 completing his assignments. I often gave Charles and Clarice cold bottles of water to take to school,
12 particularly on hot days, because I knew it got so hot and the water fountains did not always work.
13 The problem has been going on for at least a few years. (Before the 2000-2001 school year, Whittier
14 was a year-round school so some students had to learn in unbearably hot classrooms from mid-April
15 through September). Two years ago, when Jessica was in the fifth grade at Whittier, her teacher, Mr.
16 Avila, would often take the class outside on walking field trips because it would be unbearably hot in
17 the room. Temperature control was a problem in the winter months, as well, because Jessica's
18 classroom did not have heat for that entire year. Although Mr. Avila complained to the district, the
19 problem was not fixed, and Jessica would wear her coat inside to stay warm on cold days.

20 5. Whittier has a high teacher turnover rate. Every two years, it seems a large number of
21 teachers leave the school. This past year, I noticed a lot of new faces among the teaching staff. This
22 lack of continuity among the staff makes it very difficult to implement school-wide programs. For
23 example, I have been pushing to implement a conflict resolution program called "Tribes," but it is
24 impossible because, with all of the teacher turnover, I would have to retrain the staff each year. I

1 think the high turnover is due to the fact that a lot of teachers at Whittier are new to teaching and do
2 not have the "know-how" to work in the classroom. In addition, the school does not provide much
3 support to teachers and does not seriously listen to their input. Many of the new teachers are
4 idealistic and energetic, but they do not always work well with the student population at Whittier
5 because many teachers come from backgrounds different from those of the students. Furthermore,
6 there is no mentoring of the new teachers by the senior teachers at the school. New teachers are left
7 to figure out how to handle their classrooms on their own because the senior teachers do not share
8 their "bag of tricks" with them. I have heard new teachers complain about this lack of mentoring
9 and support, both informally and at this year's II/USP meetings with the principal, vice principal,
10 and some parents. The result is that the new teachers burn out quickly.

11 6. None of the classes my children have been in at Whittier have had science textbooks.
12 Instead, students are either given materials that the teachers make up or obtain elsewhere, or they are
13 not taught science at all.

14 7. At least once a week during the school year, the bathrooms inside Whittier do not
15 have soap, paper towels, or toilet paper. At least a few times a month, the sinks also do not work. I
16 know this because my children complain to me about the bathrooms and because I have found this to
17 be true when I have used the bathrooms. I complained to the principal on numerous occasions about
18 the condition of the bathrooms. Each time, she would tell me that the problem would be fixed, but it
19 never was fixed for very long.

20 8. The ceiling in the main building at the school also leaks when there are heavy rains.
21 In one hallway in particular, puddles of water collect on the floor, and the school must set up safety
22 triangles around the puddles when it rains a lot. In addition, at least once a year, the cafeteria floods.
23 While the flooding is fixed, the cafeteria is closed for one or two weeks, during which students must
24 eat cold sandwiches sent in from other school sites.

1 9. This year, an inspector found salmonella contamination in the cafeteria kitchen. The
2 cafeteria was shut down for one month, and students ate cold sandwiches from other school sites.
3 The school sent a letter home to parents informing us of the problem three weeks after the flooding
4 occurred.

5 10. There are not enough basic school supplies at the school. At the beginning of every
6 school year, I spend about \$60 to stock up on school supplies for my children, such as lined paper,
7 pencils, pens, crayons, glue, and calculators for the year. I do this because I know that the school
8 often runs out of these basic supplies. Teachers have told me that they also spend their own money
9 buying supplies because they know that it will take a month or more to receive supplies they order
10 through the school.

11 11. At a series of II/USP meetings I attended on a weekly basis from the end of January
12 through March of this year, other problems at the schools were discussed, including the lack of
13 supervision on the playgrounds, the need for counseling, nurses, and speech therapists for the
14 students, more support in the classroom for teachers, more parent involvement, staff involvement in
15 budget decisions, and more school-based control over materials adopted. Copies of the minutes
16 from the meetings I attended are attached.

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18 I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of California that the foregoing is
19 true and correct. Executed on July 17, 2001, at Pittsburg, California.

20 Melissa Marizette

21 Melissa Marizette

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PLTF 02551