

1 **Declaration of Lee Colman**

2 I, Lee Colman, 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 am a tenth and eleventh grade English teacher at Oakland Technical High School
6 in Oakland. This is my sixth year teaching at Oakland Technical.

7 3. I teach my English classes using novels and I do not have enough novels for all of
8 the students in my class. My sophomores are currently reading *Song of the Hummingbird* and I
9 only have one copy of that book for 90 students in my three classes. The students in my class
10 will never actually hold this book in their hand but instead they must read photocopies. Because
11 I cannot make 90 copies of the entire book I am forced to choose particular chapters for the
12 students to read. After each class period I take the photocopied chapters back from the students
13 because I need them for my next set of students. I will soon be reading *Grapes of Wrath* with
14 my students but again I do not have enough copies of the book to give a copy to each of my
15 students to take home. This means that the only time that my students are able to read the
16 *Grapes of Wrath* is in the classroom. Because I do not have enough books for my students, I am
17 forced to distill this incredible book into its nine or 10 best chapters because we just cannot get
18 through the whole book by reading it during class time. This situation makes me incredibly
19 angry and sad. I cannot assign reading homework for these students because I have no book to
20 give them to read with. It is truly horrible. The only book that my students will be able to take
21 home this year is a book called *Ceremony*. The only reason I have enough copies of that book is
22 because I took a class over the summer where they provided us with books for our classes. I can't
23 even describe to you the difference that it makes for my junior students to be able to have a book
24 they can actually take home. I can assign them reading homework and they will actually be able
25 to read the entire book instead of just selected chapters. The students can review the book at
26 home and for students that take longer to digest parts of the book they can re-read different
27 sections. It makes me so frustrated to have to leave out huge portions of a book. My students
28 really miss out because I cannot provide them with a novel of their own to use. This is such a

1 simple thing. Some other teachers in the English department just teach whatever books they find
2 enough of in the closet (which in and of itself is a terrible shame) but I am in the Interlinks
3 program where I connect the curriculum I am teaching with another history teacher and so I must
4 teach particular books that can be linked to the parts of history being taught by the history
5 teacher that I work with.

6 4. In my classroom I try to bring each of the topics we are reading about to life for
7 the students. This means that often my students work on projects in coordination with the books
8 we are reading. For example the students create a totem project in coordination with our reading
9 about the history of the Native Americans in the United States. I am not provided with any
10 funding for this project or the many other projects we do in my class in coordination with the
11 novels we are doing and so I often spend hundreds of dollars out of my own pocket to bring in
12 materials outside of the classroom to enrich learning and to energize the students. Last year,
13 there was a small pot of about \$300 available to help provide for the necessary materials because
14 my class was a part of an academy but between last year and this year the academy was stopped
15 and so now we that pot of money is gone. It is very hard to get by on a teacher's salary and to
16 pay for materials and supplies for your classroom.

17 5. I don't have enough textbooks for my students and so I spend a considerable
18 amount of time making copies for my classes. Thus far during the 2001-2002 school year I have
19 not had to spend my own money on copies, which I have often done in previous years. I am
20 afraid this situation will not last because the teachers were recently told by administrators that we
21 are about to have a paper crisis. It is only October and we are already running short on paper
22 which means that teachers will have to begin supplying students with paper from their own
23 pockets.

24 6. The heating system in my classroom does not function properly. On the first cold
25 day of the 2001-2002 school year, I attempted to turn up the thermostat in my room so that I
26 could warm up the classroom and the huge vents in my classroom just kept blowing out freezing
27 cold air. The vents in my classroom cannot be shut and the air cannot be turned off. All day
28 long freezing cold air streams into my classroom. The students are already uncomfortable and it

1 is only October. During December and January I often wear several sweaters, a leather jacket,
2 and leg warmers just so I don't freeze during class. The students are shivering and they must
3 wear their warm jackets in the class. I found a set of leg warmers the other day at the store and if
4 I had the money I would purchase a set for all of the students in my class because when they are
5 uncomfortable it is difficult for them to learn and to concentrate. No one should have to work or
6 learn in such uncomfortable conditions. In the six years that I have been at Oakland Technical, I
7 have lodged complaints with the administration numerous times but nothing has been done. My
8 students often tell me they are freezing but there is nothing I can do. I tell them to speak to the
9 principal, the superintendent, or the school board. It is truly frustrating to have a heating system
10 that not only doesn't work, but blows out cold air throughout the day on the coldest days of the
11 year.

12 7. In the past three years we have had three different principals at Oakland
13 Technical. This creates much chaos and confusion for both the students and the teachers. For
14 example, last year the principal who came in set up a whole new system of rules, but he did not
15 introduce himself to any of the students at the school until about six to eight weeks into the
16 school year. This creates a sense among the students that no one is running the school and the
17 teachers are left to enforce the new rules without any support. When you have a different school
18 leader every year, it also means that programs change and that the students and teachers do not
19 have any consistency.


20 8. Before school started during the 2001-2002 school year, I came into the school to
21 check my classroom and found that I was about six desks short. I asked the principal for
22 assistance in helping me to get desks from another part of the school and he did not help me. I
23 ended up asking some of the football players to carry desks from the other side of the school to
24 my classroom so that I would have enough for my students on the first day of school.

25 9. After the 2000-2001 school year ended last year, three of our teachers in the
26 English department quit. Teacher turnover is very difficult for a school because when teachers
27 leave it is difficult to maintain special programs and students lose mentors or teachers who might
28 have helped to provide an ongoing relationship with them.

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10. Currently in my class I have students who are barely writing at a second grade level. The administration does not provide any additional assistance to help students that are so far behind. It is very difficult as a teacher to teach when your class has such a wide variety of levels and you have no additional help. I know at richer schools that paraprofessionals and other classroom aides are more readily available.

I declare under penalty of perjury of the laws of the State of California and the United States that the foregoing is true and correct. Executed this 26th day of October, 2001 in Oakland, California.



Lee Colman