

Declaration of Esmeralda Ulloa

I, Esmeralda Ulloa, 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 teach Spanish on the B track at John C. Fremont High School in Los Angeles, where I have been teaching since August of 2000.

3. It is unheard of in the Fremont foreign language department-except for the Advanced Placement classes-for kids to be able to take books home for homework because we just do not have enough books. This year, I did not have enough books for my students for the entire first two months of the current school year, and I am off track now so I do not know if I will have books for my students when we go back on track next week. I do have enough books to assign one book to each chair in class, but I cannot send the students home with books for homework because I only have class sets for each of the classes I teach. I teach two periods of Spanish I for Spanish Speakers and three periods of Spanish II for Spanish Speakers; that means I have two periods of students sharing one class set of the Spanish I books and three periods of students sharing one class set of the Spanish II books. The books I have are in shameful condition. I'm embarrassed to give those books to my students because many of the pages are stuck to one another with gum or because they were wet, many of the pages are torn or have graffiti on them, and the book covers themselves are falling apart at the bindings. One of my students this year joked with me that I should have given him one book instead of three because the book he had was torn at the binding into three separate pieces. If a student misses a day when we read a certain story in class, the student cannot take the book home to work on at night to catch up because I do not have any extra books and I cannot risk having a book not come back to school the next day. During the 2000-2001 school year, I also did not have enough books for my students. I taught Spanish I for Spanish Speakers and Spanish II for Spanish Speakers, and I had only 36 books for five classes of students. One of those five classes had 42 students in the class, so I did not even have enough books for a class set for that class.

4. When I started teaching at Fremont in August 2000, my students had already had

1 seven weeks of school without a permanent teacher. I teach on the B track, which is divided into
2 four mesters, with two mesters comprising a single semester. But the B track goes off track for
3 two months after the first mester (but still in the middle of the first semester), then remains in
4 session for four months, and then goes off track again for two months in the middle of the second
5 semester. It's important to note that during the four months that the track is in session
6 continuously, one semester ends and another begins. I started teaching only one week before we
7 went off track after the first "mester" of the 2000-2001 school year, so my students only had
8 contact with their permanent teacher for only one week before they left school for two months in
9 the middle of their semester. Before I came, the kids had had at least five different substitute
10 teachers teaching the classes, and the longest any substitute stayed with the classes was about one
11 week.

12 5. I hate the multitrack system Fremont operates on because it is too fragmented and
13 makes students feel alienated from one another and from the educational experience altogether
14 because they are not in a cohesive school environment. I teach on the B track, which is never in
15 session for longer than two months consecutively in a semester. We end one session and then the
16 next week start a new school year. That leaves no sense of continuity for the students and
17 teachers on B track. Also, because we have two months of vacation in the middle of our
18 semesters on B track, by the time the kids come back from vacation they look at teachers like we
19 are Martians when we try to talk about what they learned during the previous mester. How could
20 we expect them to remember when they haven't been in school practicing for the past two
21 months?

22 6. My first classroom at Fremont, during the 2000-2001 school year, was in a
23 virtually abandoned building very far from the main campus. It took at least eight to ten minutes
24 during a passing period to walk from the main office to my classroom--it's like driving on highway
25 405 at 5:00 PM when all those students are in passing periods between classes. In addition, the
26 classroom itself was a mess. The classroom had shovels, rakes, fertilizer crates, a hose, gardening
27 tools, and folding chairs all over the place, but we didn't have books or construction paper or
28 scissors or even real desks (we just had tables and folding chairs). We had the wrong tools. The

1 substitutes who taught my classes before I got there had used a moveable chalkboard to separate
2 the gardening stuff from the classroom space. But having all that stuff in the room indicated that
3 the classroom was really a storage warehouse that the school had stuck my kids in.

4 7. I did not have enough desks for the students in my classes during the 2000-2001
5 school year. Because we did not have enough desks for the students enrolled in my class, I could
6 not assign seats to the students. We did have countless folding chairs in the storage area in my
7 classroom, where rakes and gardening tools were kept, so I used some of those folding chairs at
8 least to give my students seats. But still we did not have enough desks for the students.

9 8. Fremont operates by depending on students being absent from school because we
10 do not have enough materials for students if all the kids showed up. In my classes that did not
11 have enough desks for the students assigned to my class, my students fortunately did not stand in
12 class because enough students would be absent that every present student could have a seat.
13 Similarly, in my class with only 36 books for 42 students, students did not have to share books in
14 class because we never had 42 students who showed up at school. But kids stay absent from
15 school in part because of the message the school sends them by not being ready for them. The
16 kids know they don't have enough materials and they understand that it means that the school
17 does not want them there. No school should operate on the hope that students will be truant from
18 school or will drop out. I know what message the school sends the kids because I grew up in this
19 area and went to Jordan High School in Los Angeles Unified School District's subdistrict I. I'm
20 not unlike my students in the sense that I have no faith in the system and I grew up learning that
21 the institutions around me are not going to respond. I came back here to try to change that
22 message for the kids, but it's discouraging to see the same messages sent at school that I received
23 when I was in high school.

24 9. I've seen rat droppings in classrooms at Fremont about every four days or every
25 week. We regularly have to clean rat droppings off the bookshelves; the droppings are a
26 constant, constant thing. In the middle of August, I found a rat scull in the back of my classroom,
27 underneath a small, rat-sized hole in the ceiling. I do not allow any kind of food or candy or gum
28 in my classroom because I am trying to discourage vermin from coming there. I've kept the rat

1 scull on display in my room, though, as my way of showing the students what we are trying to
2 avoid by keeping food out of the classroom.

3 10. During the 2000-2001 school year, I taught in room 517 in the 500 bungalows for
4 part of the year. In November and December that room was absolutely freezing because there
5 was no heat. We would keep the doors open so the sun would seep into the classroom, and the
6 kids would move their chairs to try to get closer to the sun. The kids would ask me why we
7 didn't have heat and I had to tell them I put in three work orders and still nothing was done. I felt
8 so helpless.

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10 I declare under penalty of perjury of the laws of the State of California and the United
11 States that the foregoing is true and correct. Executed this 22 day of October, 2001 in Los
12 Angeles, California.

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