

David Moch Statement on *Ella T. v. State of California* Settlement

Good afternoon, my name is David Moch

I am very proud and blessed to have served the youth in my community for over 18 years as a teacher at La Salle elementary school in the Los Angeles Unified School District until my retirement at the end of the 2015-2016 school year.

I want to start by sharing with you, that there are more than 2.2 million people incarcerated in the United States. In fact, almost 25% of the world's prison population is in our country. But equally or more disturbing to me, is the high percentage of youth imprisoned by illiteracy.

I taught for over 20 years in a community with a high rate of foster kids, a large low income population and a high crime rate. And yet, I know that my students, although brilliant and capable, were not always able to live up to their full potential because they were often stifled by the lack of adequate literacy education.

In my 20-plus years of teaching, I was constantly confronted with lack of funding, inadequate support, and lack of culturally relevant materials, which heavily impeded my literacy instruction. Over the years I have seen that the students who get in trouble in school also were the ones who needed the most literacy support. Yet when the resources are not there to provide that literacy support, it contributes to the school to prison pipeline and reinforces the stigma and negative stereotypes about the youth of my community.

You may wonder why I feel I am able to speak on behalf of this community. I was born and raised in the Watts/Compton community and attended public schools in the Los Angeles Unified School District throughout elementary, middle, and high school. I attended public colleges and universities in California and came back to teach in the communities where I grew up. So I care deeply about the youth that attend La Salle and schools like it.

I am very pleased, that with the help of Public Counsel and the law firm of Morrison and Foerster, and all the other plaintiffs involved that we have been able to come together to realize this settlement, which furthers the effort to improve literacy in my community and similarly situated communities and schools across California.

What is important for me about this settlement is that the block grant will target improvement strategies for k-3 students at qualifying schools and will not be used to fund any existing activities, providing additional resources that I know teachers desperately need.

What is important about the settlement is that it calls for a literacy plan adopted by each eligible school with local community and parent involvement and input prior to adoption, recognizing the critical role of parents in inspiring kids to thrive.

What is important about the settlement is that each eligible school will be able to access culturally relevant material, which I know firsthand, we were lacking at La Salle.

I have high hopes that this settlement will help transform California's approach to literacy. My dream is that the schools participating in the grant program, created through the settlement will implement strategies that make them a model for holistic literacy education throughout California and the nation.