

Mark Rosenbaum Statement on *Ella T. v. State of California* Settlement

The settlement accepted today by Los Angeles County Superior Court Judge Rupert Byrdson in the *Ella T. v. State of California* litigation represents a comprehensive, holistic and far-reaching program for achieving literacy in California.

Access to literacy is not just the cornerstone of education; it is the cornerstone of our democracy. That every child learns to read in order to read to learn is what can make public education our state's great equalizer, that race or class or national origin or zip code not be permitted to stand in the way of children seeking to better their circumstances and participate meaningfully in the political process.

Public Counsel, together with Morrison and Foerster, brought this first of its kind civil rights lawsuit on behalf of children, their families and teachers, and community supporters who have carried on the struggle for equal educational opportunity, one that has continued for generations. We brought this case because achievement of literacy for all children remains the single most urgent crisis in California today. We brought this case because in 2020, public education is the great unequalizer in California.

This settlement is a milestone in that struggle. It is not the endpoint, nor was it ever intended to be. No one, and I'm sure Governor Newsom, State Board of Education President Darling-Hammond, and Superintendent Thurmond agree – should take this as the last word, or anything close.

The settlement will establish, upon passage of Governor Newsom's budget, a \$50 million block grant program for the 75 lowest performing elementary schools, that calls for stakeholders to identify root causes of school underperformance and develop a plan based on high quality literacy training and expertise to address those needs – making possible hiring of literacy coaches, aides, bilingual reading specialists, development of culturally responsive curricula, evidence-based professional development in delivery of literacy instruction, supports like expanded learning programs, before and after school programs, expanded school day, research-based social emotional learning approaches, trauma informed practices and training, literacy training and education for parents and caregivers. What's on the table is what has been shown over and over to work, build, and maintain capacity.

Accompanying this framework for literacy education is the creation of a statewide expert lead on literacy, a commitment from the State to visit Stockton Unified and refer the district to the community engagement initiative, and guidance on strategies to reduce racially disproportionate discipline, address academic needs prior to disciplining students, as well as recently enacted school discipline legislation.

No lawyer made this happen, this settlement derives from narratives about the passion for learning in children's hearts and parents' love. I'm grateful to share today with those in this room and their counterparts throughout California, and we hope and expect a new

governor and his team eager to do their part to remake California in the image of all its children.