

January 11, 2011

Tucson Unified School District Governing Board  
Attention: Board President Mark Stegeman, TUSD Governing Board Members  
1010 East 10<sup>th</sup> Street  
Tucson, AZ, 85719

Dear Tucson Unified School District Board Members and Superintendent Pedicone:

We as members of the Mexican American Studies Department and plaintiffs in the suit against the State law that bans Ethnic Studies in Arizona have decided to make one last appeal to you to challenge the legitimacy of HB 2281. We urge you to join in the fight to overturn this unconstitutional law. We are at a critical juncture and believe this is the time for the Board to stand up and defend our ethnic studies departments and the diversity and rich cultural heritage of our community.

By passing a resolution stating that the TUSD Ethnic Studies departments will be in compliance with HB 2281, you have embraced this law as if it is legitimate and enforceable. Superintendent Pedicone has made it clear to us that TUSD will eliminate our program if State Superintendent Huppenthal imposes the 10% budget sanction allowed by HB 2281.

The best way to protect our district is to challenge the constitutionality of HB 2281. This is the time to make clear to the State that local control is paramount to determine the efficacy of the curriculum provided by each school district within the State. The Mexican American Studies Department in TUSD is a unique program that since its inception has existed with the support and guidance of the Governing Board. Your right to continue to determine what are the best course offerings for TUSD's students is at risk and, if you proceed as announced, will be forever surrendered to the State.

Compromise with State Superintendent Huppenthal has been suggested as the best way to proceed. This path, if traveled as recommended, will lead to the elimination of the Mexican American Studies Program. If this occurs, one of the most promising curricula in TUSD will have been sacrificed at the altar of political expediency. Only by standing firm against the political bullies who seek to impose their personal agendas can the future of TUSD be protected. This is not merely an issue about a singular curriculum but the preservation of TUSD's right to make the best decisions it can as to what course offerings will be provided to TUSD's students.

State Superintendent Huppenthal campaigned for his position promising that he would "stop La Raza." His statements and actions while in public service demonstrate that he lacks the ability to exercise the responsibilities of his office in a manner that ensures equal educational opportunity. The diversity of our student population demands that TUSD preserve the ability to deliver divergent curricula. There is no singular text, teaching method or pedagogy that reaches all students in an effective manner. The complexity of the challenges we face in public education demand that we have multiple tools available. This means that our curriculum must include a wide variation of course offerings.

After nearly five years of unfounded accusations, Tom Horne has been unable to produce any credible or substantive evidence that Mexican American Studies is an un-American curriculum.

The Mexican American Studies Department provides classes that detail the rich historical and artistic contributions of Mexican Americans and Latinos to this country. These classes benefit all students, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, or religious affiliation. They are premised upon critical thinking skills and rigorous reading and writing assignments that afford students the opportunity to reach their own conclusions and develop their own beliefs.

Mexican American Studies does not censor the accomplishments of any segment of our society or diminish the importance of diversity in culture, language and belief systems. We have been forthright and candid in our strategy to address and reverse the historical failures of TUSD to reach minority students. The success of the program has been repeatedly demonstrated. Despite our success, there has been no school year when the program has not been critically examined and improved. This includes inviting scholars throughout the country to share with us their expertise in our Annual Institute for Transformative Education.

We are urging the Governing Board to reconsider its position and embark upon a strategy that defends TUSD, all of its course offerings, and the best interests of all students. Surrendering your ability to maintain local control will prove disastrous to all students, including those who currently benefit from the opportunity to enroll and attend the courses offered in the Mexican American Studies Department. We find ourselves in the position that if you do not join our suit or initiate your own, our only recourse is to include TUSD as a party defendant in the HB 2281 litigation.

Please provide a response to our requests by Thursday of this week.

Sincerely,



Curtis Acosta



Martin Sean Arce



Maria Federico Brummer



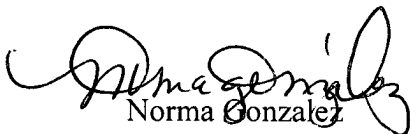
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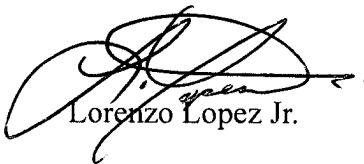
Alexandro Escamilla



Jose Gonzalez



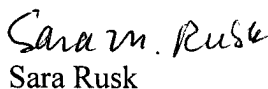
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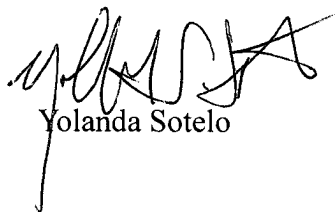
Lorenzo Lopez Jr.



Rene Martinez



Sara Rusk



Yolanda Sotelo