



Cerritos College

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Dear Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE)

My name is Santiago Andres Garcia. I teach physical anthropology and Mexican culture and history at Rio Hondo and Cerritos Community Colleges. I am writing this letter of support on behalf of Anahuacalmecac and its sister schools, **A PLEA NOT TO REJECT THE RENEWAL OF ITS CHARTER STATUS.**

As an educator in the community colleges, I observe first-hand the knowledge systems young students bring to the classroom, and assess further their learning capabilities. In assessing my students of **Humanities 125: Introduction to Mexican Culture** I find that a great majority of students (more than half) are 1) disconnected from the history of Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras, and 2) unaware of the contributions of these nations to the rest of the world. This trend is alarming and reason for concern, given that many of these students (almost 70%) are descendants of these lands. Yet despite the huge disconnect, students that enroll in my courses are eager to embrace and learn about their ancestral pasts. I can further attest that all of my students, regardless of their cultural and ethnic identity, leave my lectures wanting to develop their knowledge of history and their origins. I often tell myself, students of all backgrounds could better advance their academic prowess if taught about their culture and history at a young age... this represents a widely held sentiment among teachers that is supported by current research.

The multidimensional and multicultural approach to learning and teaching that takes place at Anahuacalmecac is instrumental to the development of both students and teachers. Their focus, which draws heavily on the people, food, language, mathematics, and places of Mesoamerica, instills almost immediately a sense of belonging, desire, and high aptitude for learning. For many of the students that attend the Semillas schools, Mesoamerica is the foundation of their intellectual train and thought. The graduating students of Anahuacalmecac, although few in numbers, move on to strengthen their knowledge, and contribute not only to their communities but also to the wellbeing of human society everywhere. We need more diverse and stimulating programs like the Semillas model in Los Angeles and greater urban and valley communities of California. As educators, parents (I am one), and policy makers we understand there are difficult decisions to make, but please not at the expense of our children's wellbeing.

It is my pledge to the learning spaces and the children that you all oversee, that I will do everything in my power, use every available resource, every ounce of training, to continue developing young student minds. I want students to walk into my classroom; proud of whom they are, with knowledge of their ancestral pasts, and ready to learn. All Students deserve to be taken to where they want to be academically, to where they ought to be based on their unique gifts! We can do this collectively; we have already taken the pledge to give up all we have for our young learners... let us continue that! I want to help, I can help, and I am available to serve.

Respectfully,

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Teacher

Cerritos Community College District

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