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January 22, 2008

Terrence J. Sejnowski, Director  
Division of Biological Sciences  
University of California San Diego  
9500 Gilman Drive #0523  
La Jolla, CA 92093-0523

Dear Mr. Sejnowski:

The recent audit performed at The Preuss School has caught our attention at the Association of California School Administrators, especially in light of the questioning by UCSD professors of the audit methodology and statistics, as reported recently in the San Diego Union-Tribune. We are concerned that an administrator has been seriously impugned by an audit that is now being called "technically flawed" by respected educators.

It is ACSA's mission to support California's educational leaders. We must set the record straight about the role of a school principal in leading classroom instruction and ensuring that all students meet California's rigorous academic standards. In education, we do our best work and afford students the best opportunities when we work together. Controversies such as the one that has surfaced about the Preuss School audit do all of us a disservice.

It is unfortunate that Doris Alvarez was not granted the opportunity to challenge or refute the audit data. By doing so, she could have shared policies in place at the Preuss School and she could have shed light on the principal's role in academic grading.

Principals have the responsibility of upholding state standards and ensuring that quality instruction is taking place in the classroom. They must ensure that students are proficient in those standards and can pass the state tests. When we last looked, Preuss is doing very well in meeting those standards and has one of the highest, if not the highest Academic Performance Index in the city.

For a school whose population consists only of disadvantaged youngsters, this is an amazing accomplishment. This is a testimony to the leadership of the principal. In fact, Doris Alvarez has been honored as both California's Principal of the Year and as the National Principal of the Year, and has received numerous other honors. The truth is, great schools have great principals. It is difficult for us to understand the university's motivation in releasing and continuing to

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support an audit that only serves to undermine the successful work of students, teachers and the principal.

In our experience, teachers are not disciplined for giving students poor grades. They are more likely to be disciplined for failing to provide adequate instruction. The auditors did not appear to understand the difficult role of the principal, nor understand the goals of the school. If the goal of this charter school is to give disadvantaged students the most rigorous curriculum possible, and auditors are recommending that this practice be evaluated, they are out of touch with the mission of the school.

We are dismayed that the university allowed the audit findings to be released without adequately investigating the role of the school principal in leading classroom instruction and student achievement progress. We also are concerned about the lack of due process for one of our administrators and feel strongly that the university should apologize for any and all damage that has been done to her reputation and to that of the school.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bob Wells". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "B" and "W".

Bob Wells  
Executive Director

BW:mm

cc: Doris Alvarez