

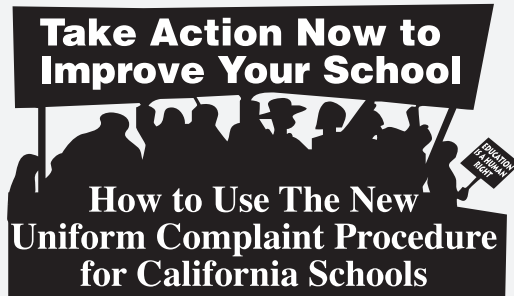
Teachers can act on their own

- ◆ Post the new “*Williams standards*” classrooms as required by law.
- ◆ Inform students and their parents that they can file complaints if the school does not provide textbooks on time or if school facilities are unsafe or unhealthful.
- ◆ Participate in the “uniform complaint procedure” by reporting violations of these problems.
- ◆ Monitor officials’ responses to and corrections of reported violations.
- ◆ Watch for a new version of the School Accountability Report Card (SARC) that will report on the availability of instructional materials, as well as teacher assignment and qualifications.
- ◆ Make sure that the SARC data are accurate.

Teachers can act collectively

Teachers can act with their colleagues and communities to provide leadership and support for the *Williams standards*. Teachers are often the first to detect health, hazard, and comfort deficiencies in their schools and classrooms. They are the closest to and most knowledgeable about deficiencies in books and learning materials. Teachers can organize to participate in the development, monitoring, research, discussions, and dissemination of information associated with new *Williams standards*. Teachers can form alliances with parents, legislators, and other groups to make sure that good “opportunities to teach and learn” are a community-wide and statewide concern.

For information on how teachers, students, and parents can use new complaint procedures:



www.JustSchoolsComplaints.org

Williams

Versus

California

Why Do California Teachers Care About *Williams v California*?

The basic materials and conditions that students need to learn well are the same materials and conditions that teachers need to teach well. So, just as students need basic *opportunities to learn*, teachers need basic *opportunities to teach*. Unhealthy or hazardous classroom conditions affect teachers as much as they affect students. Under-prepared teachers need good opportunities to develop their skills, and well-prepared teachers benefit from working on faculties where all teachers are highly skilled. Everybody in the school benefits from good conditions for learning and teaching.

California teachers have always understood that *opportunities to teach and learn* go hand in hand. They have correctly framed their struggle for teachers’ rights and decent working conditions as ultimately benefiting students. Likewise, teachers have always known that good schools for children make teaching a fulfilling career.

California teachers are devoted to their students and want them to be among the nation’s best served, best educated, and most productive. However, California’s schools often are not good places for teachers’ to work with and for their students. For example,

- ◆ 32% of California teachers who use textbooks report that there are not enough copies of textbooks for students to take home.
- ◆ 29% of teachers report that they have seen evidence of cockroaches, rats, or mice in their schools.
- ◆ Teachers who work in schools with the largest percentages of students of color report even worse conditions.

The case of *Williams v. California* is supposed to address problems like these. The case is named for a student, Eliezer Williams who courageously filed a lawsuit to demand decent conditions in his school. A number of teachers joined with Eliezer and other students in submitting testimony about the terrible conditions in many California schools. Teachers now are beginning to join with organized community groups to make sure that the state implements Williams' provisions adequately, quickly, and fairly.

Understanding *Williams v. California*

Williams v. California, filed in May 2000, argued that the California does not give millions of children the basic tools of education. *Williams* was based on two principles:

- ◆ The state of California must provide all students the resources they need in school.
- ◆ All students have an equal right to an education.

To accomplish these principles, *Williams* argued that California must establish standards for educational conditions in order to correct and prevent bad conditions in schools. In settling *Williams* out of court (August 2004,) the state agreed to these provisions to guide and act upon the new standards:

- ◆ Every student, including English Learners, must have textbooks and materials to use in class and to take home.
- ◆ Every school and classroom must be clean, safe, and in good condition.
- ◆ Every child must have a well-trained teacher.
- ◆ The new standards for school conditions must be posted in every classroom.
- ◆ Officials will investigate conditions annually and report the results to the public.
- ◆ A complaint procedure will allow teachers, parents and other community members to voice their concerns.

How Are the “*Williams Standards*” Different from the Standards California Already Has?

California has “*Curriculum Standards*,” that are aligned, more or less, with the state’s testing program. They are the state’s effort to guide and improve education by specifying and measuring what students accomplish *at the end* of their grade or by graduation. But evidence in the *Williams* case proves that many students are severely hampered by not having the necessary educational materials or conditions they need to meet the curriculum standards. It is only fair that if children are to be held accountable for what they learn, the state must be accountable for providing what children need to learn. That’s the main point of the *Williams* settlement.

All the new standards are not yet “spelled out” in legislation and school regulations. After all, it took many years and a lot of resources to develop California’s curriculum standards. Furthermore, the *Williams* language is necessarily general and there are already arguments over what “sufficient” materials means or who is a “well-qualified” teacher. However, we do know what some of these standards will look like.

- ◆ Provide sufficient textbooks and other instructional materials to be made available for each pupil in the core curriculum areas (reading/language arts, mathematics, science, and history/social science; foreign language and health). Each pupil, including English learners, must have a textbook or instructional materials, or both, to use in class and to take home to complete required homework assignments. It does not include photocopied sheets from only a portion of a textbook.
- ◆ Meet the No Child Left Behind standard of a highly qualified teacher in every core class by 2006. Many teachers without credentials serve their students well. Nevertheless, with twenty percent or more of high school teachers assigned to teach English, mathematics and science either teaching out of field, or without a teaching credential, student learning and teacher morale is put at risk.
- ◆ Establish and meet new standards for facilities. Every school and classroom must be clean, safe, healthy, and in good condition.