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September 5, 1995

Mr. Allan S. Kullen
National Co-director
The Americans All Program
5760 Sunnyside Avenue
Beltsville, MD 20705

Dear Allan:

It will have been six years next month since the San Diego Unified School District Board of Education approved the participation by the District and its teachers in a field study of your "Americans All" program. It was felt that we should summarize for you and your directors the results on the conduct of the study. This letter will: provide a brief recap of the study in our school district; reflect the results as shared by our teachers, principals and curriculum workers; and communicate to you the lessons we feel we have learned from our conduct of the field study.

You may recall, as the Basic Education Program Manager in Social Studies for the San Diego Unified School District, one of my assignments was to examine all available programs that could help improve the quality of our Social Studies education. Because of the increase in the diversity of our students, we were also vitally interested in the impact of immigration on the United States. Upon initial review, we could not find one program that was comparable to Americans All and I initially contacted you in early 1989 to obtain further information about this program, which had been developed by the Coordinating Committee for Ellis Island. As a result of that contact, I wrote you a letter (February 7, 1989) expressing an official interest in participation in a planned field study. Included in the letter was a brief summary of why San Diego would be a good place for the study and, pending Board of Education approval, the commitment of some funds from the baseline budget of the District's Social Studies Unit. This was followed in late summer by a meeting between you, your staff and San Diego Unified personnel, including representatives who had indicated an interest in contacts made in late spring. As stated in a report I made later to our Board of Education (October 10, 1989), a representative came from every school that was invited (even though it was in the middle of the summer break) and every school present agreed to participate in the program if the Board approved.

A meeting then followed between you, your staff and the District Social Studies staff to plan the Board Report and also to plan the initial implementation steps if the report were to be approved.

The initial implementation plan was based on training representative teachers in a cross section of schools of all levels where both one or more teachers and the principal agreed to participate. The teachers would receive at least two training sessions in the program and the use of the materials, and would implement the program in their respective classrooms during the

1989-90 school year. Some would implement as they were being trained and others would wait until later in the year.

On October 10, 1989, the request for approval of participation was presented to the San Diego Board of Education and approved at its following meeting on October 17, 1989. The approval of the project included permission for the Social Studies Unit to use baseline budget funds (primarily to pay for substitutes so that participating teachers could attend the training sessions) and to provide office space for a local coordinator to be hired by Americans All.

The request for Board approval included the following list of challenges facing large urban school districts as they moved from the late 1980s into the last decade of the century. San Diego city schools, as a large urban school district, face some of these challenges. The request stated that:

"1. Teachers and administrators need help in working with the changing demographics of today's school population. Not only are these districts acquiring a larger percentage of students who are of various ethnic groups, but they are also characterized by more children of poverty, teenage mothers and an increasing number of immigrants;

"2. Teachers need help in preparing students to function in a multiethnic, multilingual and multicultural society and work environment. All students, regardless of their ethnic origins, will live and work beside many persons of diverse ethnic backgrounds. To succeed, all students need to develop sensitivity to ethnic diversity as well as a better understanding of their own ethnic and cultural origins;

"3. Students need to be more aware of the historical significance and current impact of immigration and naturalization upon the history of the United States. Most texts and other materials give all too little attention to this important story that is often one of triumph over disadvantage and hardship. Many high-risk students will gain increased motivation to succeed if they are more knowledgeable about how immigrants, including many of their own ancestors, worked towards self-sufficiency and career success;

"4. All students need guidance and assistance in improving their critical thinking and analytical skills. There is a need to provide teachers with the latest information on how thinking abilities are learned and developed in addition to demonstrating techniques that enhance students' critical and analytical abilities;

"5. Many students who enter school today are not prepared to begin the standard curriculum. If dealt with in traditional ways and programs, they will simply add to the already-too-large group of dropouts. Training and programs must be provided to assist teachers to understand the needs of these students, foster high levels of esteem, to promote achievement and to encourage parental involvement; and

"6. Public/private education partnerships must be developed to help overcome budget deficits, decrease federal spending on education and to develop public and community 'ownership' of school programs."

On closer examination, what began as a review of a program that took a more intense look at immigration actually became a significant effort to deal with all of the major challenges cited above.

Following the approval of the Board of Education, we worked to establish the first two training sessions (at the Harbor Holiday Inn) on November 28 and 29, 1989. My office coordinated with the participating schools by providing substitutes to cover the classes of the 49 teachers to be trained for both the immediate and/or fall semester implementation. (The rest were to be trained at a workshop the following January.)

After the first two-day session I sent you a letter (November 30, 1989) expressing my pleasure at the quality of the presentation, and was especially supportive of the work of your co-director, Gail Christopher, and her staff. Let me quote from several paragraphs from that letter:

"I have always been very confident of the quality of materials ... and ... appropriately sensitive to the complex issues addressed. I was not initially so sure about the staff development/training phase ...

"It took about five minutes into the first day ... for me to rid myself of any ... reservations or doubts. The teachers (not always easy to please) took immediate ownership of the program and ... activities, and from that point, on the sessions reached increasingly greater heights of acceptance and quality.

"... teacher participants ... emphasized the provision of a vast amount of high quality and interesting materials ... from which they were free to select ... to tailor for their and their classes' needs [and] ... strategies emphasized a ... hands-on, learn by doing approach that had a heavily affective emphasis.

"The ultimate criteria for success will be ... how well the participants put what they learned to use ... good preliminary standards involve the ability to keep a group of teachers actively involved for two full days and have them be even more enthusiastic at the end than at the beginning.

"Gail and the staff ... established a warm, supportive environment in which teachers were encouraged to take risks in order to get the kind of involvement needed ... and also served as a good model for the kind of environment the teachers should seek to establish in their own classrooms."

The January sessions followed the same pattern and completed the training of the remaining teachers. Teachers trained in the November sessions began implementation of the program and the others began their implementation following the January meeting.

Your staff recruited a local coordinator and she was situated in our office and provided with telephone, secretarial services, etc. She met regularly with the local social studies staff to coordinate activities. She established a coordinating committee of community people who focused on public relations activities; our office organized another focusing on meeting diverse ethnic and cultural needs.

In addition, we worked with you in recruiting reviewers and in establishing an evaluation model that was then used to implement an evaluation plan. After the first year I wrote to you to summarize the first year's progress (July 25, 1990). The following list of first-year results was included in my letter:

- "1. Forty-nine teachers in 26 schools participated in the program during the 1989-90 school year.
- "2. Two-day workshops were conducted by your staff in late November and early January which trained all of the teacher participants.
- "3. All 49 teachers began the program in their schools and completed major portions of it.
- "4. A report was made to the Board of Education describing the field test and the program prior to its initiation in the schools.
- "5. An oversight committee was established with representatives from major community groups. The committee has met regularly and has provided input about needed revisions and additions to the materials, and continues as a strong support for the program.
- "6. A local coordinator, Melanie LoCoco, was appointed by you, Melanie organized a community advisory committee which has also provided strong support, and has initiated several projects to enrich and support the program.
- "7. A work location with telephone, etc., was provided at the district office for your local coordinator.
- "8. A community resource book has been prepared for this community and distributed by the program.
- "9. Numerous site and community programs have been presented.

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"10. Numerous positive media exposures have occurred publicizing everything including the initiation of the program, the training, school activities and major community activities.

"11. A major problem related to the initial title of the program was resolved with concerned community members, thanks to the leadership and support of Gail Christopher.

"12. Both the formal evaluation conducted by the project and the less formal evaluation coming from teachers, principals and community concurred that the program was of the highest quality, that it was worthy of continuation and expansion and that it served many desired purposes, including all those for which it was originally intended.

"13. A plan of operation for the second year along with the appropriate budget is in place."

I concluded the letter with the following two summary paragraphs:

"Finally, what adds to the success of the program has been the willingness of teachers to 'buy into' the program and to do what was necessary to help it succeed. It is very significant that, as of this time, a year after the inception of the program, not one solitary teacher has asked to withdraw from the program, and we have an unsolicited waiting list which will fill any possible second-year gaps many times over.

"Thank you for making it possible for us to participate in this valuable program. The students, teachers and parents of San Diego will be forever grateful for this major asset in their attempts to build an education for today."

The second year of the program, school year 1990-91, continued as planned and initiated during the first year. Although I retired in January of 1991, the remaining staff continued the program without "missing a beat." Unfortunately, several teachers were forced to end participation through changes in assignment or school. Replacements were immediately taken from the waiting list, given some staff development and then proceeded to join those other teachers continuing the implementation of the program.

The second year of the program was also enriched by the addition of expected materials for teacher and student use. Plans were made to continue for a third year.

However, as the planning continued, it became obvious that 1991-92 and beyond was not going to be "business as usual." In late spring of 1991, the district encouraged experienced (and highly paid) staff members from 55 to 64 years of age to accept an early retirement through the use of the so-called "golden handshake" (extra compensation for taking early retirement). This resulted in the loss of several key teachers and principals who had been leaders in the initiation of the program. This was then followed by a reorganization and "downsizing" of the support units in the district such as the Social Studies Department that had collaborated with the project and

provided staff and financial support for the field testing. For the 1991-92 school year, this department was downgraded to a unit within a Humanities Department, lost staff, and no longer retained a baseline budget that would enable it to support extensive teacher release for staff development.

Under its new specialist, Mark Wolfe (who had been a member of the staff during initial implementation), and with the support of K-6 Resource Teacher, Barbara Boone (who had attended all of the 1989-90 and 1990-91 training sessions), the new unit gave all the support that it could; but with its personnel reduced and finances crippled, its support was at a much lower level than previously.

These challenges to effective implementation were heightened by the need to implement the new K-12 California Social Studies Framework and the trial use of materials proposed for state adoption. It was here that a major obstacle arose because of the nature of the new framework which, content-wise, did not offer material at the same grade levels as did most states. Since the Americans All program and materials were based on the most common state models, the material no longer carried the same degree of applicability. As additional effort by the Social Studies unit and by social studies teachers generally had to be developed to try out and then implement a new framework, much less effort and attention could be devoted to continued implementation of the Americans All program and materials.

This entire problem was somewhat ironic in that the overall approach of the Americans All program and materials was very much in keeping with the approach of the framework, including the multiethnic emphasis, etc. It was unfortunate that there was not a better match with grade-level content.

In the following years, many teachers continued to use the program and materials. Many other initial users retired, changed assignments or schools, or found themselves unable to find time to implement the program, which, fine as it was, might not match up with the content to be taught. The contact between the program and the district continued. A staff development videotape was prepared using many San Diego program participants as models. The district and teacher participants continued to receive new materials as developed by Americans All. Finally, an attempt was made in 1995 to survey the participants as a means of a more effective evaluation. Unfortunately, by this time, many participants had retired, left the district or otherwise lost interest in a program they were no longer using. Thus, there was limited response from many of the initial and later participants.

I am attempting to follow up on the non-responding participants, regardless of their current location. I should have this completed by mid-October 1995, and this may generate additional data that will be of use to later developments.

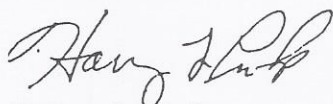
For now, as of September 1995, I would like to share the following conclusions about the program in addition to those previously quoted in this letter:

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1. As long as there was a subject-matter match and some resources to support the teachers, they universally supported and carried out the program in an exceptionally eager way.
2. The initial recruitment of both teachers and principals in support of initiating the program was a good model to get a full acceptance of the program in an area or school site.
3. The model assumed continued existence of a district support staff to service current staff members and to introduce the program to new participants. (Crucial with the turnover and changes that occurred.) It might have been better also to have trained a cadre of trainers among the teacher participants so they could have assisted and even assumed the staff development role or support by an intensive project videotape or other materials.
4. The program plan to develop a model curriculum for each state that matches the needs and overall curriculum of that state would certainly overcome the problem produced here when the new framework in Social Studies made a curriculum match with a single set of materials very difficult to deal with.
5. The program and its supporting materials comprise a rich base for the implementation of a wide variety of program approaches. If adaptations are made for each state, each teacher will have a resource collection to support a variety of possible program approaches.
6. In a state such as California many of the resource materials meet the identified need for resources dealing with a wide variety of ethnic, cultural and religious groups, which no single textbook series could possibly cover.
7. I continue in my very early conclusion, made more than five years ago, that this program with its wealth of materials meets a wide variety of schools' needs and can be used by any student of any ethnicity at any grade level in any state to meet a wide variety of both intellectual and affective needs.

Thank you for giving me a chance to play a part in developing this program and the opportunity to continue my interest in a post-retirement mode.

Sincerely,



Harvey L. Prokop
Retired Social Studies Program Manager
San Diego Unified School District