The Student Success Center

A bright, ambitious sophomore named Mateo Alvarez had become one of the most respected students at Riverview High. Teachers admire his sharp analytical mind and steady kindness; classmates gravitate toward him because he makes everyone feel capable. As the son of Mexican-American parents who worked long hours, Mateo understands how easily talented students could fall behind when they lacked support. After tutoring several friends who were struggling, he began envisioning something bigger—a student-run resource center where peers could get academic help, mentorship, and a place to study without judgment. The center would include programs specifically aimed at first-generation college prospects, English language learners, students with disabilities, and students from historically marginalized communities.

He drafted a proposal, gathered signatures, and even secured interest from a few teachers willing to volunteer their time. But when Mateo presented the proposal, the administration pushed back, citing "severely limited resources" and budget constraints. A small group of parents and two board members also objected, claiming the center might "favor certain groups" or create "division." Some insisted that students should "solve their own problems" without special support, while others worried that acknowledging academic disparities would reflect poorly on the school.

Mateo suddenly finds himself at the center of a debate about diversity, equity, and inclusion—one that forced the community to confront whether helping struggling students was a threat or a responsibility.

Believing the school's refusal was rooted in discriminatory assumptions and a failure to provide equitable access to education, Mateo is considering filing a lawsuit against the district. His case will raise complex questions about equal protection, student rights, and the legal obligations of public schools to support academic equity.

Opponents argue that public schools should treat all students the same and avoid dividing students into groups based on identity.

Supporters argue that treating everyone identically does not necessarily create equal opportunities because some students face greater barriers to success. They point out that the Student Success Center was created to address those barriers.

Matteo argues that the Center would be open and available to everyone, regardless of status. If the result is that it helps those who are disadvantaged, great. The opportunity for help is offered to all.

You are counsel for the school board. Address the following:

What legal obligations does the school board have to provide equitable access to academic resources, and how should the board evaluate whether its refusal to support Mateo's proposed resource center—based on limited funding—could be interpreted as discriminatory?

How should the school board assess the legal risks associated with parent and board-member objections that the proposed center might "favor certain groups," and what steps should the board take to ensure that its decision-making process complies with anti-discrimination standards and avoids the appearance of bias?

Or

You are counsel for Matteo.

What legal arguments can he raise to show that the school's refusal to support the Success Center—despite acknowledging severe resource limitations—constitutes discriminatory treatment under federal or state education-equity laws?

How can Mateo demonstrate that parent and board-member objections about the center "favoring certain groups" reflect discriminatory intent or contribute to a hostile decision-making environment that violates the school's legal obligations to treat all students fairly?