

**CORE AND EXTENDED CORE LITERATURE ADVOCACY FORM**  
**6-12**

Title of Book Always Running  
Author Luis J. Rodriguez  
Publisher Touchstone  
Year of Publication 1993  
Major Theme(s) immigration, gang influence  
Suggested Grade Level 11<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup>  
Your Name Kristin Beeson  
Check One:

Teacher  Parent  Administrator  Student

**Brief Summary of Book:**

*Always Running* details the life of author Luis J. Rodriguez. Using exquisitely poetic prose, Rodriguez describes the hardships that he faced growing up in a family of impoverished immigrants, and explains how that lifestyle left him vulnerable to local gangs. Stemming from his desire to be protected and have some control in his otherwise powerless life, he found himself getting sucked deeper and deeper into gang culture and what he described as "la vida loca." As the novel progresses, Rodriguez comes to the realization that his participation in a gang had nothing more to offer him than a path to jail or a grave. As uplifting as Rodriguez's own triumph is, the story concludes on a bittersweet note as Rodriguez reveals how influential gangs continue to be in certain disenfranchised neighborhoods by sharing that he failed to prevent his own being sucked into Chicago's gang culture.

**Reasons why I think this book should be considered:**

I believe that *Always Running* should be considered for adoption because it clearly aligns with the California English/Language Arts Standards while remaining an engaging text that is relevant to many students. With teacher guidance, students will be able to present literary criticism of the text as it gives students the perfect opportunity to analyze the political and philosophical assumptions presented in Rodriguez's experiences. Moreover, when considering our district's demographics, *Always Running* offers students the important opportunity to read a literary text that was written by a Chicano author. Finally, I believe that *Always Running* will be an engaging text that students look forward to reading.

CORE AND EXTENDED CORE LITERATURE ADVOCACY FORM

6-12

Title of Book Always Running  
Author Luis J. Rodriguez  
Publisher Touchstone Books  
Year of Publication 1994  
Major Theme(s) Civil rights, Adolescence, cultural connections  
Suggested Grade Level 11  
Your Name Stephanie Slivinski  
Check One:

Teacher  Parent  Administrator  Student

Brief Summary of Book:

Set between 1951-1979, Always Running tells the heartbreaking yet empowering story (true story) of the early life of author Luis J. Rodriguez. Born in El Paso, TX to immigrant parents, Luis soon moves with his family to East Los Angeles. Treated as an outcast in elementary school for not speaking English, Luis's difficult road began. Soon he fell easily into drugs and gangs. Always Running tells the painful yet poetic tale of an artist and a fighter who overcame injustice, fear, discrimination and the gang life. ~~He~~ In the end he walks away from "La Vida Loca" forever and  
Reasons why I think this book should be considered: changes for the better.

1. Written by an inspirational author of color in modern times.
2. High interest topics for teens. Author: Luis J. Rodriguez
3. Provides a Latino role model (Luis J. Rodriguez)
4. Loved by piloting students (encourage reading + writing)
5. Teaches inspirational life lessons
6. Academically appropriate reading level: Grade 11
7. Historical Cross-Curricular Connection: Civil Rights Era  
and a connection to Hispanic Culture

**CORE AND EXTENDED LITERATURE SELECTION RUBRIC**

TITLE Always Running: La Vida Loca, Gang Days in L.A.  
 AUTHOR Luis J. Rodriguez  
 GENRE memoir  
 SUGGESTED GRADE LEVEL 11

CATEGORY	DON'T KNOW	1/WEAK	2/AVERAGE	3/STRONG	4/EXCEPTIONAL
1. Represents universal themes					✓
2. Has rich powerful language					✓
3. Portrays cultures authentically					✓
4. Portrays cultures with sensitivity					✓
5. Has multiple layers of meaning					✓
6. Has been considered a classic or has potential for permanency					✓
7. Is a strong example of a specific genre					✓
8. Content is compelling and encourages discussion of intellectual, social, and/or ethical values					✓
9. Is relevant to a content-area curriculum, cross-curricular integration, and/or concept development					✓
10. Is favorably cited or reviewed in recognized professional sources, such as educational or academic journals					✓

For teachers and administrators: Which English/language arts standards are addressed by this book? For Grades Eleven and Twelve:  
 Literary Response and Analysis 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, 3.8, 3.9  
 Writing Applications 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4  
 Listening and Speaking Strategies 1.2, 1.4, 1.5, 1.6, 1.11, 1.13

CORE AND EXTENDED LITERATURE SELECTION RUBRIC

TITLE

ALWAYS RUNNING

AUTHOR

Luis J. Rodriguez

GENRE

Autobiographical Narrative/Memoir

SUGGESTED GRADE LEVEL

11

CATEGORY	DON'T KNOW	1/WEAK	2/AVERAGE	3/STRONG	4/EXCEPTIONAL
1. Represents universal themes					✓
2. Has rich powerful language					✓
3. Portrays cultures authentically					✓
4. Portrays cultures with sensitivity				✓ +	
5. Has multiple layers of meaning				✓ +	
6. Has been considered a classic or has potential for permanency				✓ +	
7. Is a strong example of a specific genre					✓
8. Content is compelling and encourages discussion of intellectual, social, and/or ethical values					✓
9. Is relevant to a content-area curriculum, cross-curricular integration, and/or concept development					✓
10. Is favorably cited or reviewed in recognized professional sources, such as educational or academic journals					✓

For teachers and administrators: Which English/language arts standards are addressed by this book?

Literary Response and Analysis: 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, 3.8, 3.9

Writing Applications: 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4

Listening and Speaking: 1.2, 1.4, 1.5, 1.6, 1.11, 1.13

**CORE AND EXTENDED LITERATURE SELECTION RUBRIC**

TITLE Always Running  
 AUTHOR Luis J. Rodriguez  
 GENRE Autobiography  
 SUGGESTED GRADE LEVEL 11<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup>

CATEGORY	DON'T KNOW	1/WEAK	2/AVERAGE	3/STRONG	4/EXCEPTIONAL
1. Represents universal themes				✓	
2. Has rich powerful language					✓
3. Portrays cultures authentically					✓
4. Portrays cultures with sensitivity			✓		
5. Has multiple layers of meaning				✓	
6. Has been considered a classic or has potential for permanency			✓		
7. Is a strong example of a specific genre					✓
8. Content is compelling and encourages discussion of intellectual, social, and/or ethical values				✓	
9. Is relevant to a content-area curriculum, cross-curricular integration, and/or concept development				✓	
10. Is favorably cited or reviewed in recognized professional sources, such as educational or academic journals	✓				

For teachers and administrators: Which English/language arts standards are addressed by this book? Reading 2.4, 2.5;  
 Literary Response + Analysis 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5b, 3.5c, 3.7b, 3.7c, 3.8, 3.9

Karina Bravo

11/3/11

English III

Mrs. Sliwinski

Per 4

*Always Running*

Have you heard about a book called *Always Running*? I bet you have but, maybe you haven't read it because someone told you it contains inappropriate language to teach and involves violence and drugs. Well let me tell you that this book has an amazing example to all the people that are involved in a gang and wants to get out of it. Have you heard that thing go wrong so that you can appreciate them when they're right? *Always Running* is a book that shows you that you can change your life. I believe there are many important reasons for the MDUSDSB to approve the adoption of *Always Running*! *AR* is inspirational to all the adolescents that want to change their life because it talks about the hardships of immigrating to the United States, dealing with the hardship of trying to rise above the gang violence of California and inspire teens to make a change for the better.

Many of the adolescents in the U.S were born here but their parents are immigrants from other countries. This is the case of Luis J. Rodriguez, the author of *Always Running*. He was born in California but his family emigrated from Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, just like mine did. As every other immigrant that comes to this state in search of a better life, Luis and his family suffer from discrimination, racism, money and family problems. Luis was nine years old facing a new life in East L.A, as other immigrant that came to this state he did not know how to speak English so he had to face the discrimination and racism in school. Most of his first year in school Luis was ignored, and he was told

to sit in the back of the class, building blocks the whole time their classmates made fun of him and even call him with funny names, years later he was also put on a "C" track. In his neighborhood white people referred to him, his family and other Mexicans as "greasers". All through their family tried to overcome every single problem together they suffered because of jobs, and as we know there's times when we can't handle it no more and we give up, that happened to Luis's family they lost everything because they had no money, and that led to the breakup of his family. Luis felt ignored, with no life so he turned to gangs.

Adolescents have always faced many challenges such as the pressure to fit in, be cool, and even get involved in a gang. In *Always Running*, Luis J. Rodriguez tells his own personal story of growing up in East L.A facing all types of pressures a adolescent could face. Luis gets involved in a gang at age of 12 "The Impersonations" and starts to experience the violent life. At age 13 he gets his first tattoo saying "Mi Vida Loca" (my crazy life). After this Luis's life changed in a totally different way. He got involved with real gangs after "The Impersonations". Lured by a seemingly invincible gang culture, he witnessed countless shootings, beatings, and arrests, then watched with increasing fear as drugs, murder, suicide, and senseless acts of street crime claimed friends and family members. He shows how hard it is to get out of a gang once you're in it, but he also shows how everything impossible is possible. His process to change involved the Civil Rights Movements of the of 1960's where immigrants were fighting for human and civil rights. Luis even made a protest movement on his school for encouraging students to fight for their rights and everyone started to see him different and he started to feel important and that he was work keeping. His mentor Chente Ramirez also helps him realize that it was time to change his life with all the encouraging words he told Luis such as "you have to make a choice now. Either the craziness or violence- or here, learning and preparing for a world in which none of this is necessary" and " when you win, we win, but when you go down, you go down alone" this were strong words that made Luis realize he was doing everything wrong

When you're down you feel like your life is totally lost. In *Always Running* Luis J. Rodriguez is a role model for all people especially adolescents. He shows how although you make mistakes and disappointments you can overcome all you have being through and make a change for a better. Life is hard not only in East Los Angeles but in every single place in this world. I'm pretty sure that many adolescents will identified with Luis J. Rodriguez and he will inspire them to make a change. Like he did, Luis shows trough the quote "through every dark night, there's a brighter day after," "that so no matter how hard it gets, stick your chest out, keep your head up and handle it" By overcoming the gang life, he made a difference in his own life and countless others for the MDUSDSB.

Now is the time to make the impossible possible, and approve *Always Running* to help at least change the life of one person and let many other identified with Luis J. Rodriguez. Lets read Chicano books in school not just books written by white authors. Lets not hide the real, and read books that talk about drugs, violence, religion, discrimination, etc. this books may contain inappropriate language but in the end it makes us realize how hard life gets once you make an error in your life. I hope this essay helps you see that *Always Running* is a book that has more to tell than just gang stories, it is a book that has the potential to set a crooked kid straight.



Juan Moreno

English III

Mrs. Sliwinski

November 4, 2011

Always Running

At Mount Diablo High school there is only ONE teacher that is allowed to read the book Always Running. I believe that this book is vital to the education of many here at Mount Diablo, especially because Mount is a school that has several issues that are depicted in this book. It is unfortunate that this book is only read by Mrs. Sliwinski because this type of literature would really help the students not just at Mount Diablo but in any high school. Although some may consider this book inappropriate or offensive, I think that these are things that students have seen or heard about already in their lifetime. I support the approval of Always Running for three main reasons. First, I believe that even controversial books can ultimately boost, not deter, our educational wealth. My second reason is that this book is a perfect example of what many students in high school go through each and every day. Finally, I insist that by reading this book, students could learn to make better decisions in their life. For these reasons, I conclude that the School Board should approve this book to be read by other students not just the few that are in Mrs. Sliwinski's class.

That old saying "don't judge a book by its cover" very much comes into play for this book. Always Running is an autobiographical narrative written by Luis J. Rodriguez. This book covers so many of the "real" things that teenagers face now-a-days. Throughout the book, Luis describes to us all of the challenges that he faced growing up

and how he overcame them to become what he is today. Although there are some parts in the book which may be somewhat explicit, the deeper message buried in this book lies in its values that it has to offer to the teenage group. For these motives I find this book to be inspirational not just to me but for any teenager.

In the book Always Running Luis is forced to make decisions that would drastically affect his life later on. As the story develops, we find out how Luis grew up in East LA surrounded by the “thug life”. Luis lives the hardcore gang life through his teenage years and eventually he realizes that this will take him nowhere and becomes a leader in his community. The life that Luis lived can easily be compared to what students here at Mount live through every day. I can confidently say that every person here knows at least one person that is involved in a gang. Something needs to be done to help these students with their decision-making, and Always Running is a good example that they can follow to make the correct decisions.

By reading this book I believe that many students will change the way they view life and the people around them. It is a precise example of what students at Mount Diablo High go through and if this book were made available to more students, I am sure that it would become one of their favorite books. The School Board should approve this book and allow that more books like this are accessible for students because this way we can relate to the novel and apply what we learn to our lives.

# Site Literature Committee

School: Mt. Diablo High School

Date: 5/24/12

Facilitator/chair: Stephanie Sliwinski

Rec'd  
5/30/12  
*[Signature]*

## Members

Name	Position
<u>Stephanie Sliwinski</u>	<u>Teacher / Facilitator</u>
<u>Kristin Beeson</u>	<u>Teacher (MDHS)</u>
<u>Jessica Preciado</u>	<u>Teacher (MDHS)</u>
<u>Linda Pete</u>	<u>Principal / Administrator</u>
<u>Marina Green Lolohea</u>	<u>Student (MDHS)</u>
<u>Amber Green</u>	<u>Parent (MDHS)</u>
<u> </u>	<u> </u>
<u> </u>	<u> </u>