



CALIFORNIA
DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION

1430 N STREET
SACRAMENTO, CA
95814-5901

JACK O'CONNELL

State Superintendent of
Public Instruction

PHONE: (916) 319-0800

November 29, 2007

Dear County and District Superintendents and Charter School Administrators:

SENATE BILL 777 WALK-OUTS

Recently there have been threats of student walk-outs to support a misguided protest of a new measure signed into law, Senate Bill 777.

SB 777 simplifies and clarifies existing civil rights protections for California students. It does not expand civil rights protections in the *California Education Code*, but it does clarify just what those protections include by providing an explicit and clear list of all the prohibited bases of discrimination in publicly-funded kindergarten through grade twelve schools. SB 777 also updates the more specific prohibitions against discrimination scattered throughout the law to reference *Education Code* sections 220 and 66270. Finally, the measure replaces the law's outdated references to "handicapped students" with "students with disabilities."

We must encourage students to stay in school and resist calls for a protest and walkout over SB 777. What I find most troubling is that possible student absences may lead to missed opportunities for them to learn and that this lost time may not be recaptured. Additionally, there may be fiscal consequences to school districts for funds lost due to student absences. The California Department of Education has a duty to implement the laws about public instruction that are passed by the State Legislature and the Governor. Every child has a right to a safe learning environment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jack O'Connell".

JACK O'CONNELL

JO:ab