

This top 10 list needs some work

David Letterman's nightly countdown of top 10 lists is designed to make light of serious topics. California State Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O'Connell developed a top 10 list of educational resolutions for 2005



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On education

that will help students succeed in a complicated world — and these are no joke.

No. 10: "Encourage more students to go to college."

Some students can attain the college and university experience with hard work, determination and good grades. Unfortunately, higher education is costly, making it difficult for larger numbers of students to attend. Many California students opt for junior college over four-year colleges and universities because it can be expensive.

Although state schools are more affordable, they still cost a pretty penny. How will more students be encouraged to go to college?

No. 9: "Further reduce the burden of data collection for schools and districts."

There is an endless stream of paperwork documenting student performance in filing cabinets at schools. With the rise of technology, this data also consumes electronic files, not to mention the time of the employees who get to collect the data. How will Jack O'Connell further reduce the burden of data collection and paperwork for schools and districts?

No. 8: "Encourage more student reading and parents reading to children."

This concept is essential to learning. To become a better writer, reader, and test-taker, students need to read more. When parents take the time to read to

children, a better attitude towards reading is developed. How does a single person, such as Jack O'Connell, effectively encourage more student reading and parents reading to children?

No. 7: "Provide more funding for education."

That's an easy one, considering the fact that millions of dollars have been stripped from education over the past four years. How does the state of California plan to increase the funding for education when this sector is one of the first to lose its money?

No. 6: "Improve student health, fitness and nutrition."

Health education is usually only offered for one quarter or semester in school. Physical education is provided only a few days a week, instead of every day. How does a school improve student health, fitness, and nutrition?

No. 5: "Develop pre-K quality standards in preparation for universal preschool."

Does this mean that preschool will be offered by school districts?

No. 4: "Increase the number of students passing the California High School Exit Exam."

The questions on this exam are fairly basic. Who are the students that fail this test and what are the contributing factors that may be the answer of why they are not passing?

No. 3: "Increase the rigor and relevance of course work in high schools so that graduates are better prepared for college or careers."

This is a great proposition. The issue is that if students are currently having a difficult time graduating high school, how are they expected to handle an increased work load?

No. 2: "Increase student achievement."

Raising the bar of achievement usually results in students rising to the occasion by putting forth a greater effort. This contradicts statements in No. Three, but does hold truth.

And ... the No. 1 resolution for educational success is: "Work to close the achievement gap."

More students are capable of achieving success, yet their efforts create a gap between their reality and potential. How will the state of California and Jack O'Connell attempt these feats? Check out the California Department of Education's Web site for more detailed explanations.

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