



**Department of  
Education**

*Dennis M. Walcott, Chancellor*

September 12, 2012

Dear Parents,

I have a profound and personal connection to our public schools. I attended public schools in Queens, my four children graduated from public school, and my grandson attends my former elementary school. My experiences as both a public school student and a kindergarten teacher have only deepened my conviction that the most important thing we can do for our children is to provide them with the quality education they need to fulfill their dreams.

As we begin the 2012-2013 school year, I would like to take a few moments to reflect on the ways we can work together to prepare your children for college and careers. Helping your sons and daughters achieve a bright future is our top priority, but we cannot do it without you. You are your children's greatest role model and most powerful advocate. When you are involved and support the important work going on in the classroom, your children are more likely to succeed.

Your support is especially important this school year. The 2013 State Math and English Language Arts tests will, for the first time, reflect instruction aligned to the Common Core standards, which describe what students need to learn each year from pre-kindergarten through high school in order to graduate ready to succeed in college and careers. Course work in all the grades will be more challenging to meet these higher standards. Our students will be expected to read more complex texts, develop written arguments, and problem-solve. Their critical thinking and creative skills will increasingly be put to the test.

This year, we are also expanding our special education reform initiative, *A Shared Path to Success*, which means that more of our students with disabilities will have increased access to the same rigorous academic curriculum as their peers without disabilities, while still receiving special education supports and services. Being educated together benefits all students socially and academically.

Of course, many other things need to be in place for all our students to achieve to their fullest potential and one of those is your assistance. You have the power to make this year a rewarding one for your children. I would ask you to join me in setting high expectations. If you make it clear that you expect success, your children will rise to the challenge. If you show them that you value learning and education, they will achieve academically.

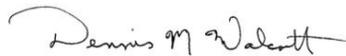
There are many ways for you to participate in your children's education and promote their intellectual, physical and emotional well-being. No matter their age, talk to them and get their opinions about local, national, and international events. Check in with them daily and ask questions. For instance: Do you feel like you're struggling in any of your classes? Are you

reading challenging non-fiction texts outside the classroom? Are you solving difficult math problems and applying solutions to real-world situations? What advanced courses and afterschool academic clubs are you interested in? What did you eat for lunch today? Did you ride your bike or get any physical activity after school? Reinforce the importance of on-time school attendance, appropriate behavior and class participation, and teach your children how to remain committed to long-term goals and develop resilience in the face of obstacles.

I urge you to become involved in your children's school as well. Attend parent-teacher conferences and volunteer at school events. Reach out to teachers and guidance counselors with questions and let them know you will do everything you can to help your children succeed. Never forget that your involvement makes a difference.

Let us all enjoy the excitement of the first days of school: the sense of anticipation, the feeling that all things are possible. With your participation, we can ensure that that excitement never fades. Working together, we can help all our students meet the high expectations we have for them and prepare them for college, careers and full, rewarding lives.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Dennis M. Walcott".

Dennis M. Walcott  
Chancellor