



June 26, 2012

Dear Families,

As the school year comes to an end, I am excited to tell you about an important step we are taking to ensure all New York City public school students graduate from high school ready for college and careers. Starting this September, the vast majority of our students with disabilities who are entering a public school will have the opportunity to attend their local community school, where appropriate.

Our goal is to ensure our students with disabilities are fully embraced in their community schools and participate in a wide range of classroom and school-wide activities with the appropriate support. Students with disabilities will continue to be provided with the services they need as stated in their Individualized Education Programs, and at the same time they will have increased access to the same curriculum and be challenged to reach the same high expectations as their non-disabled peers.

As Chancellor, I believe that this transition will benefit *all* of our public school students and school communities. Students with disabilities demonstrate improved attendance rates and score better on state reading and math tests when they are educated in inclusive classrooms, and research indicates that students *without* disabilities also benefit from learning in the same classrooms as their peers with disabilities.

To ensure our teachers and school administrators are best prepared for this transition, we will provide ongoing training and resources to best support excellent teaching and learning. This will include a guide for principals, professional development opportunities for teachers through support from expert coaches, and external partnerships with higher education institutions such as Teachers College, Columbia University.

To ensure families have sufficient information about this transition, I have asked each school principal to establish a process for providing information about the ways in which the school is prepared to best meet the needs of each individual student. If you have specific questions or concerns, please speak with your school. For more detailed information about this transition, please also visit our dedicated parent Web site at: <http://schools.nyc.gov/Academics/SpecialEducation>.

I am firmly committed to ensuring that all students in New York City receive a high-quality education that includes opportunities to excel in grades pre-K to 12 and beyond. When parents, teachers, and school leaders work together, I know we can achieve great success for all students and the entire school community. I appreciate your support in this effort, and I wish you a safe and relaxing summer.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Dennis M. Walcott'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping 'D' at the beginning.

Dennis M. Walcott
Chancellor