



February 23, 2012

Dear Colleagues,

Last week, the appeals process concluded, and the courts have said that we are legally obligated to release Teacher Data Reports provided to schools from the 2007-08 through 2009-10 school years. Prior to this court ruling we only released data reports without teacher names, and we've deliberately held off on releasing this data until all appeals were exhausted.

Tomorrow, the City will comply with that court order. This means that several newspapers and television stations that filed the original requests for the information will run stories about the data shortly thereafter. If you taught English Language Arts or math in grades 4-8 during those years, your results may be part of the data we must release.

We want to be clear on where we stand: the data is now two years old, and it would be irresponsible for the press to use this information in isolation to render judgments about individual teachers. The data does not tell the whole story of your work as a teacher. Teacher Data Reports were created primarily as a tool to help teachers improve. They show how much progress teachers helped their students make each year, compared with the progress students made in other classrooms across the City—while accounting for students' previous academic histories, poverty levels, and other factors outside a teacher's control. The reports gave teachers and principals one useful perspective on how well teachers were doing in their most important job: helping students learn.

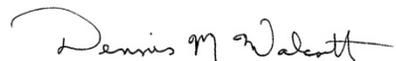
However, these reports were never intended to be public or to be used in isolation. Ultimately, each news organization will make its own choices about how to proceed, and this may result in your name appearing in the paper or on media Web sites. Although we can't control how reporters use this information, we will work hard to make sure parents and the public understand how to interpret the Teacher Data Reports.

We have been preparing information and support resources for you and your school community; these will be available by tomorrow morning at <http://schools.nyc.gov/Teachers/TeacherDevelopment/TeacherDataToolkit>. For individual issues or concerns, teachers should speak to their principals. For log-in or other technical questions, call HR Connect at 718-935-4000 when schools reopen on Monday.

We will continue working together to build a better teacher evaluation system that gives you the feedback and support you deserve as professionals. The State's new system will include value-added analysis that will count for 20 percent of a teacher's evaluation—similar to the method used in the Teacher Data Reports—alongside classroom observations and other measures. This is the approach to evaluations required by State law, and it also has the backing of some of the country's leading education researchers.

I believe that we have one of the strongest teaching forces in the country. Treating teachers with the professionalism they deserve, while having honest conversations about the ways in which we all need to improve, can only make our schools better.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dennis M. Walcott". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'D' and a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Dennis M. Walcott
Chancellor