



February 2013

Dear Parents,

When I visit our schools, I always enjoy meeting with and talking to our students. This school year, I am seeing students read more difficult books and spend more time writing. When students share their opinions, teachers are asking them to use evidence to back up their points. In math class, students are solving real-world problems.

These changes are part of the new Common Core standards, which describe what all of our students from pre-kindergarten to 12<sup>th</sup> grade need to know and be able to do to graduate from high school ready for college and careers. These standards are challenging, and that's on purpose. To qualify for good jobs in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, our students need to develop strong writing, critical-thinking, problem-solving, and creative skills. The Common Core standards, with support from you at home, will help us get there.

This spring, for the first time, students in grades 3-8 will take State reading and math tests based on these higher standards. Tests for high school students will begin to change next year, starting with the English Regents exams and some math Regents exams. We expect these new tests to be more difficult to pass, at first. But this change is important. It's going to help our schools broaden students' options for the future. Students, teachers, and parents need to understand where students are on the path to graduating prepared for college and a good job. With time and hard work, I have full confidence that our students will rise to the challenge.

Over the next few months, I encourage you to speak with your child about these new assignments and tests. Reassure your child that struggling with more difficult coursework is understandable, and encourage him or her to take on this challenge. The Common Core standards are a big change for our students and our teachers, and teachers have been working hard to support students during the transition. Fully adjusting will take time. But I believe in our students and teachers, and I know we will get there.

Resources to help you learn more about these changes are available online. Visit [nyc.gov](http://nyc.gov) and search for "Common Core Parent Resources." I am also asking teachers and principals to talk with their school communities this spring about these new assignments and exams. I encourage you to attend upcoming parent-teacher conferences to learn more. Thank you for your commitment to your child's education.

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' and 'W'.

Dennis M. Walcott