



**Department of
Education**

Dennis M. Walcott, Chancellor

December 18, 2012

Dear Parents,

We begin this week with heavy hearts as we grieve for the families and loved ones of the children and educators at the Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut. This tragedy is a reminder to us about how much we cherish the children in our care, and it reminds us how important it is for every adult to be a source of strength and support for them.

It is especially important in the days to come that we work together to support our children. At schools, our staff are prepared to meet the needs of students who may experience anxiety or fear as a result of learning details about the tragedy, and we will ensure full days of instruction. For some children who are already under increased stress as a result of the hurricane, this event may increase their anxiety or fear. To support parents, we have collected some valuable [resources](#) that you can use when talking with your child about this tragic event. These resources provide advice on how to speak with children of different ages, signs of stress, the need to limit or monitor children's exposure to television news reports and more. I encourage you to read and download these important guidance documents. Please also be sure to inform your child's school if your son or daughter requires additional support at school.

Please be assured our schools are safe places for students. Schools and buildings have designated staff members who serve on Building Response Teams that prepare for emergencies through the development of School Safety Plans. Every year, schools review and revise their School Safety Plans in coordination with the New York City Police Department, who have the responsibility of approving these plans. These plans help our schools remain ready for an emergency at a moment's notice.

As we approach the holiday season, let us keep the Newtown community in our thoughts and prayers and let our children know how much they mean to us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dennis M. Walcott". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Dennis M. Walcott
Chancellor