



THE NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

JOEL I. KLEIN, *Chancellor*

OFFICE OF THE CHANCELLOR
52 CHAMBERS STREET - NEW YORK, NY 10007

September 1, 2009

Dear Colleagues,

The United Federation of Teachers (UFT) and the Department of Education (DOE) are looking for volunteers to participate in a Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation study to help develop fair, accurate, and useful guides to what really makes effective teaching and learning. This two-year research study is premised on the principle that good teaching is multi-dimensional, and that teachers and their schools need consistent and reliable information in order to identify and support good teaching.

Both the United Federation of Teachers and the Department of Education will be collaborating with independent researchers on this project because we all recognize that the work of teachers must be measured in ways that are fair and valid. Nationally, current measures of teaching rarely take into account the full range of what teachers do (no single measure really can), or the context in which they teach. The *Measures of Effective Teaching* project, on the other hand, begins right in the classroom and will explore a broad array of teacher measures: video observations, surveys, and student growth. It will compare these measures to each other, and to nationally recognized standards, and it will look at their inter-relatedness. It will be informed by actual teacher practice.

In other words, the real work of real teachers in real classrooms will be central to every aspect of this project. That's why both the UFT and the DOE have looked forward to working with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation: we want to support student achievement with solid research based on what our teachers do in class.

To that end, together, we are inviting eligible teachers to join us in this project. Participation is completely voluntary, and those teachers who volunteer will be allowing Gates-funded researchers to collect information about their teaching from a broad variety of sources in order to answer two basic questions: what is our common understanding of the teaching learning process, and how do we measure it consistently? To answer these questions, researchers will video classrooms; collect surveys from participating teachers and students; assess teacher knowledge of content and pedagogy through a brief test; and collect information on student academic growth through specially administered standardized tests. Researchers will look at the videos through the lens of several different sets of nationally recognized teaching standards to see which work best. And, teachers will also provide their own reflections on the lessons that have been videotaped.

As you can see, Gates hopes to capture the full range of what teachers do by gathering multiple sources of information, including information on the context in which the teachers teach. The goal is to use this information to create multiple, reliable measures of good teaching.

And that is important to all of us. We all know that teachers teach best when they know what the standards are for their teaching, have been supported in reaching those standards, and feel assured that no single, snapshot measure will determine the course of their career. If you volunteer, you will be joining us in a project that will help us understand what works when it comes to assessing teachers. We hope this will lead to fairer guides for all of us, and raise the level of achievement in our schools.

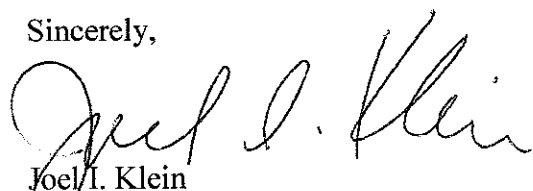
To acknowledge their contribution over the course of the two years, teachers will receive a \$1500 stipend. And of course, they will also have access to their own videos as well as student test results.

Finally, let us say clearly at the outset: this is a research project, and it assures full confidentiality to the teachers who volunteer. That means that principals and other DOE employees will not receive copies of your videos, surveys, or assessments. And, teachers will be able to opt out of the program at any time. This project is not about the evaluation of the 1000 teachers we hope will join us, and it cannot be used by the DOE to evaluate them; rather it is about evaluating the multiple evaluation measures that are used across the country in order to ensure that they are fair, transparent, and consistent. Schools need a better understanding of these measures. To that end, the researchers do hope to share aggregated data with the central DOE and the union, which could prove helpful in supporting teachers.


Schools and teachers will have opportunities to learn more about this study in the coming weeks through borough meetings and other communications. More information, including important details about which schools and teachers are eligible and the requirements of the study can be found at: <http://schools.nyc.gov/Teachers/Resources/Other/Grants/MET/default.htm>

We hope you will join us in this project; it may turn out to be among the most meaningful projects of your career. And, thank you, as always, for your work on behalf of our students.

Sincerely,



Joel I. Klein
Chancellor



Michael Mulgrew
UFT President