# Data Walls

# Cautions, Use, and Alternatives

## Introduction:

Teachers use data walls for several reasons. First, data walls give students ways to see their progress—an experience that can motivate them to achieve. Second, data walls—especially those that make rubric ratings apparent to students—can also give students information about what is needed in order for them to achieve. Third, data walls provide a quick snapshot of overall class performance. They can help teachers determine if most students have learned, only some have learned, or most are still struggling.

Data walls can have negative consequences under some circumstances:

* If they list students’ names, they actually breach students’ privacy and may also violate their confidentiality. The effects may be most pronounced with students who are struggling. Sharing information about their test scores or grades on a board that others can see might embarrass them and lower their self-esteem.
* Data walls might cause students to focus more on their scores than on the value of what they are learning.
* Data walls might encourage students to compete against one another rather than to focus on their own progress.

## Alternatives

Teachers can get some of the benefits of data walls without causing negative results if they use one or more of the following practices:

1. Developing a spreadsheet or other data-display tool to create a virtual data wall for their own use.

2. Using data folders that allow students to keep track of their own performance without disclosing their scores or grades to other students.

3. Posting distributions of scores on data walls but without students’ names.

4. Posting scoring rubrics on the data wall and allowing students to rate their own work and record it on a graph using check marks or stickers (but not their names).