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**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO, CHANCELLOR CARRANZA TOUR P.S. 59  
AND HOLD MEDIA AVAILABILITY**

**Mayor Bill de Blasio:** Well, I just want everyone, first, take a moment to look at this floor in front of you, the extraordinary shine on this floor. And if you went around the building with us, you saw absolutely beautiful classrooms, not only just clean, like extraordinarily clean, lively, colorful, energetic classrooms. Richard and I have spent a long time going through classrooms in our careers, and immediately I could see the glow in Richard's face that this is exactly what we want to see all over the city. Now, we're here in Bed-Stuy and it's a community that often hasn't gotten its fair share. But in this school, as the principal's made clear, this is equality and fairness in action in this school. The children getting the very, very best available in public education in this whole city, in this whole country. You're not going to find better examples of what a school should look like and should offer than what you saw on this tour.

So, tremendous congratulations to everyone in the school community for what you have created here. Our principal, Dr. Cherry-Ann Joseph-Hislop, you are a force of nature, let me tell you. I'm amazed, as you're telling all the things that you've achieved, all the grants you've won, all the support you brought in, all the programs you've created for the children in this school, you are a difference maker and I want to commend you for that. I can tell that your energy is fueling this whole reality here at P. S. 59. And we're here because we're all getting ready for school. And we want to show you the on-the-ground reality, the people who are doing the work every day, the boots on the ground in our schools every day, getting ready for our kids to come back. And it's an extraordinary group of professionals who are really committed to this work. You can see it. You can literally see all around you, how much work has been done already well before school begins.

Now, I want to thank the labor leaders who are present. You're going to hear from one of them in a moment, but I want to thank all of them, including Shirley Aldebol, the Vice President and New York City Schools Director for 32BJ SEIU. I want to thank Ray Macco, the Assistant Business Manager for Local 94; Sean Francois, the President of Local 372 DC37 AFSCME – all of these unions play a crucial role. Their members play a crucial role in our schools and it's one school community where everyone helps each other out to make things come together for our kids. And your members – I want to just personally thank all of you – your members are doing an extraordinary job, getting things ready. I also want to say that we've had a lot of support for our public schools from our elected officials. And one elected official, I can say from personal experience, she played a pivotal role last year when we were discussing the future of mayoral accountability for education and the things that we needed to more deeply ensure the voices of

parents were heard and continues to be a champion for public education in Albany, Assembly Member Tremaine Wright. Thank you so much. Appreciate, so much, all you are doing.

So, everyone, look, we made a major announcement yesterday. Everyone knows that. And that announcement was a symbol of the common vision that we have with our labor community in the schools that we have with the people of the city, bringing our schools back in a manner that's healthy and safe for all our kids. But when you listen to the principal, she makes very clear why it matters. The kids who need to experience all this love and support from educators and from adults. Our guidance counselor, where are you? You were here a moment ago? She – there you go – was telling me about, they take college visits, under normal times, obviously, college visits for fifth graders in this school. And then they put up the pennants from the colleges on the walls to remind children of what they can and will aspire to. This is a very supportive community. And if a child comes in here in need, if a child needs emotional support, mental health services, physical health support, if a child needs nutrition, if a child needs counseling, if a child has a problem at home and they need an adult they can turn to, this is where it happens. Let alone the extraordinary educational opportunities here. If you look at all the specialized educational opportunities in this one school, the STEM programs, the dance, all the pieces that are meant to inspire kids and energize them and get them committed to their education – this cannot be achieved the same way outside the school building. I am certain this school did a remarkable job with remote learning and will continue to, when kids are learning remote. But you cannot achieve so much as what happens inside this school building. You cannot achieve the magic that happens here, any place but inside this building with these extraordinary professionals.

So, that's what we're going to continue to do. And, you saw, I think, as you walked around, the electrostatic cleaning is happening, the personal protective equipment is in place, the hand sanitizer, the social distancing – by the way, for all of you who were in the classrooms, you saw classrooms outfitted for nine kids that normally have as many as 24 kids. So, the social distancing is there, all of the ways of protecting, layer upon layer of health and safety measures, again, the highest standard in the world here in New York City. Now one outstanding issue for this school for P. S. 59, P. S. 59, like many schools, very enthusiastically heard the Chancellor's announcement on outdoor learning, it is a very clear indicator that schools were ready because hundreds and hundreds of applications came in within days. One of them from P. S. 59. Principal, I'm happy to report, your application for outdoor learning is approved. So, you can go ahead with that. I wanted to come over here personally and tell you. And so, with that, the man who is leading this extraordinary effort, surpassing every other city in the nation to get our schools ready for all our kids, our Chancellor, Richard Carranza.

**Schools Chancellor Richard Carranza:** So, thank you, Mr. Mayor. I appreciate the fact that you are here with us, here at P. S. 59. There's something that you often say that I don't think people hear often enough and you often comment when we visit schools, if the school was good enough for me to send my child to then it's good enough for New Yorkers to send their children to. This is definitely a school that I would enthusiastically send my children, if they were younger, to. So, I want to congratulate Dr. Hislop for the great work that she's done. Her vision is obvious in this building. But I also want to thank our Assistant Principal, Zachary Mack, for his work as well. You make a dynamic team, the both of you, so I just want to congratulate you on that.

As we visit schools and you see the level of detail in terms of not only the cleanliness, but the focus on the academic program, and as we heard Dr. Hislop talk about how they work and they worked since March, but how they continue to work teachers, the administrators, counselors, support staff, at making sure that the students that come to P. S. 59 don't ever think about their ZIP code, but that they experience the education that is happening within their ZIP code. I love that because that's what education is all about. So, I want to thank you for what you showed us. I think it's incredibly powerful. It does take a village and I can tell you that you can feel the village at work right here at P. S. 59. With your permission, Mr. Mayor, I'd like to say a few words in Spanish –

[Chancellor Carranza speaks in Spanish]

And with that, I'll turn it back over to you, Mr. Mayor.

**Mayor:** Everyone, again, I think – I don't blame anyone who doesn't see the inner workings of a school community, but I've had the honor during the entire education of my children, pre-K to 12th grade in the New York City public schools, and as a former local school board member and member of the Education Committee in the City Council, I've been in countless schools and I've gotten to know school communities. This is something I think has been a little bit missing in the whole dialogue about bringing school back. Schools are in community. For children, for parents, it is almost a second home. And families depend on our schools and they feel a deep connection. In the school community everyone contributes. And the custodial team is absolutely crucial. And I have seen the level of commitment, folks in custodial services know that everything else depends on them, and they know that everyone needs them to get it right. And the level of personal commitment is outstanding. And it's exemplified by the President of Local 891. And I want to say that I've worked with Robert Troeller over many years and he, of course, has the job of representing his members and their needs and their interests, but he also really cares deeply about New York City public schools. And we've made a lot of reforms, a lot of changes the right way, honoring the men and women who do the work. Not privatizing, not attacking the workforce, but working with labor and the men and women who do the work, and we've come a long way in this city. And you go through a school like this, you see how powerful that work is. So, my honor to bring forward the President of Local 891, Robert Troeller.

**President Robert Troeller, Local 891:** Thank you, Your Honor. I want to point out to everybody here that although the schools was shut down for most of the students and staff and they went to remote learning, members of my union, Local 891, the members of 32BJ, Local 94, 372, and 375, they all continued to work in the schools. And they've been here throughout, you know, as have the other City employees, those that run the buses and the trains, the cops, the firemen, the hospitals. All these people have worked through this whole ordeal and the city has come too far. We've done too well to fall backwards. So, we need the resources necessary to keep this going. We want to encourage more parents to send their kids back to the school and feel safe enough to do that. But we have to have the resources. The federal government has to move and work on a stimulus to provide money to the states and the cities and the school systems in particular. New York City needs the resources. If the federal government doesn't move, then the State has to move and grant the authority necessary to borrow funds so that the

city can keep on working. It would be more than a shame, it would be outrageous for the city workers who worked through this whole ordeal and kept this city going and brought us back to this point where we can get back to a normal existence for them to lose that job, to layoffs. It would be outrageous. It just shouldn't happen. It should not happen. Thank you.

**Mayor:** Thank you, Robert. And Robert, amen. And thank you, and what you're doing and a lot of other labor leaders, letting our leaders in Albany know how important this is. I want to really emphasize this, the labor community, municipal labor in the city, has said, they want to avoid layoffs, and they're going to do something about it, which is convince Albany to come back, give us that long-term borrowing authority, and keep fighting together for that stimulus in Washington as well. Thank you for that. Okay, everyone, we have time for a few questions. Andrew.

**Question:** [Inaudible] inspection of all 1,500 school buildings and if so, have any building been deemed not ready [inaudible] –

**Mayor:** To the best of my knowledge, and the Chancellor come in after me, we're either done with all of them or almost everyone at this point. We've got a handful we're looking at closely that we think there's a bigger set of challenges in. Now we have a new date we're working with now. So, the real question, Andrew, is going to be, if we have a handful – and I mean a handful – can we make the adjustments we need to get where we need to go under these conditions? If we can, great. If we can't, we're going to come up with an alternative. But to the best of my knowledge, we're either done with every single inspection or only a few left to do.

**Chancellor Carranza:** Yeah. So, all of those inspections will be completed by the end of the day today. There is a very small list of problematic buildings, relatively speaking. But there's, with additional time now, additional time to remediate some of those particular issues. As the Mayor and I have stated, if a school or a classroom doesn't meet our standards, we won't use that classroom or that school. So, we'll have more to say about it as soon as we get the final evaluations done by the end of the day today.

**Unknown:** [Inaudible] Spanish –

**Mayor:** Yeah, let's do this one in Spanish, and then I'm sure the Chancellor can see you after if there's others.

**Unknown:** [Inaudible]

[Chancellor Carranza speaks in Spanish]

**Question:** Mr. Mayor, can you tell us, where is the City at, in terms of approving outdoor learning plans? Obviously, you mentioned P. S. 59, but what were you specifically looking for? And can you also speak to safety of students learning outside, especially [inaudible] –

**Mayor:** I'll start, and the Chancellor will jump in. What I'm seeing so far, hundreds and hundreds of requests coming in, overwhelmingly being approved. Some take a little more work. If it is a

street that there needs to be an evaluation, can it be shut down, again, something like a bus route, that's probably not going to work, is there maybe an alternative in a case like that. But generally, we're seeing good applications, usable applications. They are getting approved quickly. Certainly, we'll have time to approve everything that can be approved in advance. But I think we're seeing a lot of excitement among principals and school communities. And then in terms of safety, clearly, look, you've got three ways that you can really use outdoors just to make it, in my view, simple. One is the existing school spaces, courtyard, a school yard, maybe a sports field, where you already have control of those spaces. And they're secure. You've got an adjoining street. This used to happen with the school that my kids used to go to on Carroll Street and Brooklyn. Adjoining street would be closed off constantly for play activities and special activities because it was not a very busy street. You know, they put up barriers, there were adults monitoring at all times. Safe. And the last piece would be if there's a park nearby. I think that all comes down to you want to keep it as close as possible and obviously a lot of adult supervision, but that, we do that normally would field trips and things like that. So I think those are the three buckets. I think that there's no question in my mind, a principal would only apply for something, if they think it's safe. And if they don't want to do outdoor learning, Lord knows they don't have to, it's their choice.

**Chancellor Carranza:** So in terms of outdoor learning plans, our commitment was that anyone that submitted an outdoor learning plan by last Friday would get a decision by this Friday. We've already approved 301 outdoor learning plans. It's over 300 and we're well on track. They're being approved on a rolling basis. So we're well on track to meet that goal. Everything that was submitted by this Friday. I also want to just clarify that I've read and I've heard that there may be an impression that if you didn't submit an outdoor learning plan by last Friday, you couldn't submit a plan. That's not true. You can continue to submit the plan. Our commitment was just those submitted by last Friday would be notified of their status by this Friday. But if school communities are coming up with plans, keep them coming in. We'll keep on approving quickly.

**Question:** There are some parts of UFT that sounded even more angry after the agreement was announced yesterday, because they said there was no input, they had no consultation before the agreement was announced. How worried are you about some more disagreements erupting as a result [inaudible]?

**Mayor:** No, we're moving forward. There's been obviously, a robust dialogue in this city for weeks and weeks about the things that we had to address. I know there's been lots of dialogue within the union. It's a big organization. There's going to be different points of view. But there was a thorough process here. We're moving forward.

**Question:** The head of the School Safety union told me on Friday that he felt there was no way that School Safety could be responsible for outdoor learning and the safety of kids outside in high crime areas. Because one, they simply have not trained for that, for protecting kids outside the school. And two, they are unarmed –

**Mayor:** So, yeah, let me start and the Chancellor will jump in. Greg is someone I've worked with for a long, long time. We will continue in dialogue. We've been in constant dialogue with him on many issues of late. Look, listen to the places I said that might be used a courtyard, a

playground, schoolyard, sports field. Kids are using those in any year and they're kept safe. And School Safety plays a role in that. Again, field trips, there's always a way of addressing safety in field trips. So if we close off streets, it's not a new thing. I would only say, I appreciate his concern. We want to work with them, but we're not talking about anything here that hasn't been done on a regular basis by New York City schools. It's just being made more systematic because we're addressing the coronavirus for this year only. And hopefully only part of this year. So unquestionably, if a principal does not feel good about safety, for what any reason, including consulting with the School Safety team, they just don't have to go forward. You can even have the right to do outdoor and then decide not to use it. So again, this is where a lot of choice has been put into the system. Whether it's choice for parents or choice for principals. If they want to apply for outdoor, great. We're going to work with them. If they want to use it is their choice, how and when. Last thing I'd say is we know outdoor has its limits. Chancellor and I've talked about it. He was a principal for many years. Outdoor is a piece of the puzzle, but there's going to be days when no one's going to be able to use outdoors just because of the weather. You want to add? Go ahead Katie.

**Question:** I wanted to ask again from this morning for you and the Chancellor to talk a little bit more about the training for remote teacher. I know Chancellor this morning you said that one of the reasons why school has been pushed back is to give teachers the opportunity to train on these new process. So can you speak a little bit about it? I know that some of these days teachers will be learning about safety devices. Is it realistic that they will be fully trained on this? And is it separate training, is there a whole other program? Can we just get a little more detail on it?

**Mayor:** Before the Chancellor. It's a good question. I just want to say, look months and months went into getting ready for September 10th. We agreed with our labor partners on a slight delay. We're going to use that slight delay for full effect to get even more ready. But when we get this in gear and moving. Anyone who thinks it's perfect is not looking at the reality of the coronavirus. We are going to have to make adjustments, the first days. Like the first day is any school year, we're going to learn by doing and figure out the best way to handle things. But what I do know is tremendous lessons were learned from the remote experience of the spring and they were applied now. And the preparation for in-person has been extraordinary as you saw it in this tour, really meticulous preparation, both in terms of the educational dynamics and the safety dynamics.

**Chancellor Carranza:** So Katie I'll get some information. Then I'm going to phone a friend and ask Dr. Hislop if she can talk about what she's done in terms of the remote training for her teachers. Because she's done an excellent job. But part of the training, I think training might even be a little bit of a misnomer that we've used. And I apologize for that. It's going to be orienting a new pedagogical methodology. Which is education speak for teachers are going to teach very different this year than they've ever taught before. And by that, I mean this -- so not only will teachers have to have time for coordinating with the in-person teacher and the remote teaching teacher, they're going to have to set up their systems so that they're communicating, they're collaborating, they're planning together. So that students that have part of their week in-person, and then the other part in remote learning, are not out of sync with each other. There's a continuum of learning. That just takes time and coordination, not necessarily training. But that's going to be a huge component of the time the teachers will have to actually do that coordination.

Where the training will come in is that we all have experienced a very traumatic event, a global pandemic that has killed hundreds of thousands of people across the country. So for children that left their school buildings in March and now are coming back, some to their same school building. But some, you know, were fifth graders that are now middle schoolers going to a different school, never got a chance to say goodbye to their friends. And in the meantime, they may have lost folks. Social emotional learning, and supports trauma informed curriculum and pedagogy and training teachers on how to roll that out is also going to be part of that training both remotely and in-person.

In addition, when we transitioned very rapidly in March to remote learning it really, really highlighted in our technology some gaps that we had. In other words, the platforms -- most people think about Zoom and they think about Google classroom. But aside from those communication platforms, there has to be a place that becomes the repository for curriculum. So if I'm a fourth grade teacher, where do I go virtually and have my curricular materials, my supplemental materials, my guides, my rubrics? And then how do I share those with my colleagues that are teaching in-person and my colleagues that are teaching in another modality as well? So that's part of the training as well, uploading curriculum, getting it organized in the platform that they're going to use for the instruction for that year. And then schools like this school, where you're going to have teachers that are doing some really creative things like live streaming and doing other kinds of things. How do you set that up as well? All of that becomes part of what this remote experience will be. Dr. Hislop you want to talk a little bit about what you're doing because they're doing some really cool stuff. That's a very technical term by the way.

**Principal Dr. Cherry-Ann Joseph-Hislop, PS 59:** I would say fortunately for us at PS 59, when we started remote learning, we started with Google classroom. So teachers got a lot of training on that platform. And over the summer, the DOE offered us iLearn. And we also allowed our teachers opportunities to learn this new platform. Which in some cases it's a little similar, but the iLearn is a more robust platform. It gives us more capacity in our schools. We will have the curriculum there, we'll have the learning standards, we can differentiate, we can do a lot more with iLearn. We've started this training over the summer. Like I said it's a technology platform that is new, but it's not totally new because we used Google classroom for remote learning. We've been using Zoom, we've been using Microsoft Teams. So we're familiar with these platforms in most schools. So it's now just building capacity on the iLearn platform. And getting our teachers more comfortable so that additional days is really getting teachers more comfortable with the platform and trying new things, exploring all the possibilities that it would bring to the educational environment.

**Question:** Dr, Hislop, can you talk about the outdoor configuration? Your outdoor learning configuration, what that looks like?

**Principal Joseph-Hislop:** For us, we are starting outdoor learning with physical education. That's where we're starting and then we will increase as time goes on. But we're starting with physical education, some dance classes, and then we'll build from there.



**Mayor:** Where?

**Principal Joseph-Hislop:** We have a playground in the back of the school that we have put in for to use for our outdoor learning. It's not blocking off the streets, it's in the back of our school.

**Mayor:** And it's been approved?

**Principal Joseph-Hislop:** Yes, that's what I just heard, thank you.

**Mayor:** [Inaudible]

**Question:** Yeah. Also for Dr, Hislop. But you know this is a year where principals are responsible for a lot of extra, different, new things. Can you give us a sense of what's left for you to get done before we are all in classrooms back September 21st? Do you need more staff? Are you in, you know, what's kind of on the agenda or the checklist of a new and you know, totally different I'm sure, responsibilities heading into this year?

**Principal Joseph-Hislop:** Well, at PS 59, we only have one teacher who's working remotely. So all staff is – we are fully staffed and ready to go when school reopens. For us, it's more the professional development, ensuring that our teachers are ready to use the new platform. And also training for parents and students on the platform. That's where our work lies. In terms of our building, we've passed all the inspections, the building has been approved and we're ready to go. It's just giving us time to get the curriculum and the internet platform ready for learners.

**Question:** About how many of your students or what percentage of your students are going to be remote only this year?

**Principal Joseph-Hislop:** We have close to 60 percent of our kids doing remote only. And the rest coming every day. We also had some parents who are – once a parent did not respond to the survey they were defaulted as blended. So some parents, if we have not heard from them, they are now blending. But we believe that we'll have about 40 percent of our kids in the building when we reopen.

**Question:** And that will allow them to be here every day, rather than every other day?

**Principal Joseph-Hislop:** We had already planned to have our special education students, our most vulnerable population here every day. With our numbers right now, we believe we can comfortably accommodate every child every day.

**Question:** Mr. Mayor, under the terms of the deal, [inaudible] UFT, I'm reading from their news release, even if the overall case rate across the city were to remain low, all school buildings could be closed if there were current, uncontrolled outbreaks in school. What does that mean?

**Mayor:** I'm sorry. I want you to repeat.



**Question:** Sure. This is from their release. If the overall case – even if the overall case rates across the city were to remain low, all school buildings could be closed, if there were current uncontrolled in schools with COVID-19. What does that mean?

**Mayor:** Well, I'm glad you asked it. Because I think we can turn that totally around and it'd be equally true. If we have a situation and we've seen this in a lot of countries around the world where they did not have outbreaks in schools and we stay below the three percent level citywide and you know, that's a seven day average. So we would have to have three percent or more over seven days. You have the possibility of every single school staying open all the time. But I think you can flip the equation too and say, God forbid, if you had specific outbreaks that cause – so it would mean multiple cases in multiple classrooms, in a school, you shut that school for a period of time. And then it comes back. But again, it's very theoretical. I wanted you to repeat it because I saw the legalistic hook there. It means I think ,what if, what if, what if. And that's not how we're planning. We're planning and you're seeing the extraordinary level of layering of health care approaches here. You're seeing really impressively here, the social distancing and again, nine kids in the classroom, unheard of in the history of New York City. Everyone's going to have their face mask on, adult and child alike, hand sanitizer, social distancing throughout the building, all of these pieces. I think what we're going to see is the vast majority of schools have consistency. They're open, they're ongoing. Once in a while, you're going to see a classroom where there's a case. Like we said, then that classroom goes down for 14 days. Then they come back. You have multiple cases simultaneously in different parts of the school. The school is assessed for at least 24 hours, shut and assessed for at least 24 hours. So you could have any number of scenarios, but as fair as saying that is saying, we could go the whole way through without a single school being shut down. Either one is possible. The important thing is not just with the UFT, with the CSA with DC 37 and with so many other key unions, everyone wants to get to schools opening and opening safely. And we're ready to do that. That's the bottom line. Thanks everyone.

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