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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO HOLDS MEDIA AVAILABILITY

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Good morning, everybody. We're here today to talk about our public schools. I want to give you important updates and I want to start by saying, you're going to hear from Chancellor Carranza, you're going to hear from the president of the UFT, Michael Mulgrew, and the president of CSA, Mark Cannizzaro. We've all been talking, and I'm going to give you a sense of those conversations, but one of the things that has been essential to not only the conversations we've had in the last 24 hours, but what we've talked about over the last months is our belief in the power of public education, and it really is important to frame this upfront. We're in a country right now that's going through a lot. We're in a city that's going through a lot. We're in a democracy that is struggling and everyone can see. The hope, the hope the city, I hope of this country, the hope of our democracy, is to protect and preserve public education. This is what has always been the foundation of a fair and just society.

Everyone here at this table is devoted a lot of our lives to proving the power of public education, to uplift every young person knowing they will be our future. And what animates all of us is a belief that it has to be fair and equal. That a child who is the most disadvantaged deserves just as much, even more, than a child who was born with all of life's privileges. Every one of us has seen the power of an educator or any member of a school community reaching out to a child and giving them that helping hand, that support, that love. Everyone here understands a school community is an extension of the family and the home. I can tell you that in my many years, as a New York city public school parent, I often felt like the elementary school my kids went to literally felt like another room of our house. We felt so close to the school community, to all the teachers, all the educators, everyone. It was a part of our life and it was what made our lives better, and our children felt that love all the time, and I've talked to countless parents who feel the same way. Now, we all know how important it is in the midst of this crisis to have every tool available to help our children and we will always, as long as we need, provide remote education at the highest quality possible, but we also know nothing replaces the in-person experience. There are some out there who suggests that remote education should be our future and I want to say, no, it can't be. It is our educators working with children live and in-person in the classroom, that is where all of our future possibilities spring from because that's where children are truly and moved.

So, this morning, I start with our clear, strong dedication to our public schools and to in-person learning. But I also want to be clear and very straightforward about the fact that real concerns have been raised by my colleagues and look it's true, labor and management will have differences. People have different responsibilities to their members or in my case to all the people of this city, but they are my colleagues, Michael and Mark. They are people I've known for many, many years, and we have worked together to address really complex issues many a time. Yesterday morning, they reached out to me and they said they had real concerns about

specific things that had to be done to make sure our schools could start effectively, start safely. That although they acknowledged that some real progress had been made that not enough had been made and more had to be done to make sure that things would be as strong as they needed to be. Now you can imagine a conversation like that is a tough one and a complex one, went on for hours, but we worked together in a respectful spirit to work through each and every issue. I literally made a list of 20 different concerns that we're going to work through to address because they were real concerns, because they were honest concerns, because the knowledge they have in the school system is really extraordinary, and they would talk to their members all the time and they were bringing back information that had to be heard and acted on.

So, as a result of that meeting, we talked through what it would take, step-by-step, to get things right for in-person learning and of course remote learning as well to serve our children and families as best as possible while protecting everyone in the school community. We believed from day one, we could ensure health and safety first, but also ensure the best quality education. You know, if someone said, let's focus on health and safety and we don't care about our kids and families, I would have rejected that. If someone said, oh, let's focus on in-person learning, but without health and safety, I would have rejected that. We said, we have to do it all and we have to do it right. So the fact is that we talked about the different types of schools, their levels of readiness, and how we could work together to make adjustments that would best allow us the right kind of start.

So, here is the updated approach we will take, and it involves several phases. They move quickly and therefore we'll be able to serve children and families well, but they will include some adjustments compared to the previous schedule. So, here's what we'll do, beginning this Monday, September 21st, 3-K and pre-K, early education sites will be open, pre-K and 3- K classrooms will be open. District 75 schools, schools that serve our special education kids, kids who need a lot of support and love, those schools will be open. We then will have the next phase on Tuesday, September 29th, when K-5 schools and K-8 schools will open. And then on Thursday, October 1st, middle schools and high schools will open. Now this means the in-person learning. Obviously remote learning has begun already. The orientations have begun. Remote learning will continue throughout for all students as these phases come into play. But again, September 21st, this coming Monday, 3-K, pre-K, special-ed, and then – that means District 75 – then on Tuesday, September 29th, K-5 and K-8 schools. Thursday, October 1st, middle schools and high school.

Look, we are doing this to make sure that all the standards we've set can be achieved. Talked about over those last weeks what we gleaned from looking around the entire world, literally the best practices around the world, and that meant that we had to have social distancing throughout schools, cleaning constantly, face coverings on students and adults alike, a host of measures that had to be put in place all system-wide. We're continuing to deepen those efforts because we have to meet that gold standard for the good of all in our school community. Now, given the realities of teaching children in person in an unprecedented situation, and I'll emphasize this before turning to my colleagues, unprecedented, no one's ever tried to do this here in this country on this scale. It's just never been done before. Just like going to all remote in March was unprecedented, creating a blended learning approach while still in a pandemic, but serving people and helping to

bring back our city, that's unprecedented. It's incredibly complex, but it can be done and it will be done.

I announced several days ago that we would add 2,000 additional educators to support our schools as they restored in-person learning. The meeting yesterday really focused on where there were still needs and where we had to beef up that number, and we went through a very specific process to determine what was the right additional number of educators needed. And I want to thank my colleagues for that, because people rolled up their sleeves and went through the whole system to determine the need. So, I'm announcing today in addition to the 2,000 educators that we announced several days ago, we're going to add 2,500 more. 2,000 originally, 2,500 more, grand total of 4,500 additional educators being added into our schools and classrooms immediately. We have, thank God, a number of different reservoirs of talented individuals ready to go. Several thousand who work for the DOE right now and other roles. We have substitute teachers, many of whom have been serving over the last month in our regional enrichment centers, many of whom have served in our schools before, thousands ready to go. We're also working with the City University of New York, which is going to help us find graduate students, adjunct professors people who know how to teach, people who are pursuing education degrees, young people who are planning to be teachers and here's a chance to start using that love and passion and ability in a classroom. Between all those sources we're quite confident we can get the 4,500 teachers we need and have reserve beyond that.

So, this is a huge undertaking. It is difficult. It's challenging. It's not the easy way. It is in fact the hard way, but it's the right way. I want to thank all my colleagues for doing the hard work to see this through and we'll continue to do that work literally hour to hour to get our school system up and running well. Now, I want to talk – turn, excuse me – to the man who has been engineering this effort with an incredibly dedicated team at the DOE. I cannot begin to tell you the long hours these folks have been working, weekdays, weeknights, weekends, it never stops, but they've been fighting through to get the schools up and running well and safely for all. I'll turn now to our Chancellor, Richard Carranza.

Schools Chancellor Richard Carranza: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. I think about how far we've come since March. And I think about that a lot. And how resilient, not only our students and staff, but our families have been over the last six months, adjusting and adapting at every single turn. And I'm proud of all of our students, staff, and families. And I want to thank you. And I want to thank President Mulgrew and President Cannizzaro. Again, it was truly incredible to be in that room and listen to that conversation about how we're going to make sure we do this right. So all of our work up to this point, we know people are working hard and we're going to continue to build on that work that's been done at our school sites as we move forward. Today's announcement means that all of the planning our schools have done up to this point will continue and we're giving schools more staff, more time and more support. And this helps us to have the strongest possible start to the most unconventional school year any of us have ever experienced. And I know that I have 100 percent confidence that our educators will rise to the occasion. Our students will have new teachers coming on board and we'll have lesson templates and plans set up to hit the ground running. We'll offer even more opportunities for professional learning to strengthen remote practices. And we're going to make sure that through all of it, our students have access to their guidance counselors and social workers. Because the learning starts for all

students on Monday. While only some learners are coming in person on the 21st, all learners will begin day programs remotely on Monday.

In a normal year reopening the nation's largest school system is an incredible feat. I used to watch this from afar in awe. This year, what we're achieving is truly unprecedented. Our staff have shown tremendous patience and leadership. And I'm grateful for all of them showing up and keeping our students front of mind, every single day. I'm also grateful to our nurses and custodians and food service workers who have shown up throughout the pandemic and continue to do so. They are my heroes. And I know so much has changed, but our fundamental mission has not -- high quality public education for students of New York City. And we truly believe that given where our city is, this is possible in a blended learning environment with all of the safety precautions in place. This will help us do that.

Mayor: Thank you very much, Chancellor. And now turning to our labor colleagues. Again, we all have talked constantly. We're going to be talking a lot more in the days ahead as we complete this phase of the mission. I want to thank both of them for their extraordinary commitment. So I'll start with someone who, again, I've known a long time and has always told it like it is to me. And been really clear about both what is a problem, but also what is a solution. I'll turn to the President of the UFT, Michael Mulgrew.

President Michael Mulgrew, United Federation of Teachers: Thank you. I want to first thank the Mayor and the Chancellor for a very, very forthright conversations that we had yesterday. And a lot of people would not have handled it in a responsible way. I know a lot of people would have been worried about different things, but to say, if we're going to do this, we must make sure that we get this right. We want our school system up, running, and safe. And we want to keep it up, running, and safe because that's what the families, the children of this city deserve. And this is an unprecedented challenge. Most people would run away and find a way out to not deal with taking on such a responsibility. So I thank the Mayor and the Chancellor for really being partners – partners in trying to make this work, but partners who are not afraid to say, we need to do, we need to step back. We need to figure out a couple of things. We now have seen after a 10 day period, that there are some blanks that we have to fill in. And we're going to do that because we have a promise, a promise to every parent, to every teacher, to every guidance counselor, to every student that walks into our buildings that we are doing what needs to be done to make sure that you have your education. But it is also safe.

To the teachers, to all of the guidance counselors, the paraprofessionals, the therapists, the secretaries, to the principals and the assistant principals, it's been a tough two weeks. But your voice, your advocacy about what you need, the evidence of that work is here today at this table. Everyone understands that what you're doing and what you're attempting requires a bravery, requires you being our heroes right now on behalf of our children. And I've always told people that you all are the guardians of the children of this city. You've been through more than almost any other school system throughout our history. And you've always risen to protect our school system and to protect our children. And that's what we're all doing here today. We are protecting our schools, our children, and their families, and ourselves against this horrendous situation that we face, which is known as our pandemic. But we're doing it in a way where we have each other's backs. So, for me, yes, I thank everyone here at this table for our really tough, but

constructive conversation yesterday. This is the leadership that you need to see more often across this country. But again, the true piece about today is we are here making sure that we're going to -- the responsibilities that the system owes you, owes every single person in a school building, whether you work there, or you're coming to class, we are going to make sure that it is in place. So, I thank you all. You truly are the heroes and the guardians of the children of this city.

Mayor: Thank you very much, Michael. And now I want to turn to Mark and say that in our meeting yesterday and in other meetings, Mark has laid out very specific concerns and real life situations that he brings back from talking to his members, that have really illustrated both the things that are working and the things we just have to do better. And again, always helping to point us to the solutions that we have to reach together. So I want to introduce the President of the CSA, Mark Cannizzaro.

President Mark Cannizzaro, Council of School Supervisors and Administrators: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. And Chancellor, thank you. And Michael, thank you also for your comments. Look, we would all rather not be here today, having this announcement, and making this announcement. We would much rather be talking about opening school on Monday to all of our students. I know that our school leaders and teachers and all of our staff, as well as of course, and probably more so than anyone else, our parents and students would much rather be walking into school buildings on Monday morning. In any form that we can possibly put together, whether it's this remote form where some of them are coming or not. However, it wouldn't be safe. It wouldn't be safe. Our folks have been telling us and the teachers and the school leaders and all the folks that are working in the schools have been letting us know that right now, currently they're understaffed. They need some other items. Some schools, you know, need some more safety tools. It's varied across the city. But opening Monday to everyone would not have been safe for our students. And this is something we've been speaking about over and over again. And I do appreciate, I know you've heard this a couple of times around this table, but the conversation we had yesterday was real. It was deep and everybody listened to each other. And I was happy to hear that. I was happy to see that. And my hope is that we've come to a solution. Now we'll be able to staff up. We have a week or so to get people into buildings. We have a week or so to match them with the schools. And I look forward to working with the DOE so that we can have these folks provided and we could open safely and efficiently and effectively for our children. Thank you.

Mayor: You very much, Mark. Well, everyone, look, we're all working together and we're going to keep working together, every single hour, literally to get things right. So, I want to thank all my colleagues because we are devoted to getting it right. We will. And we're going to move forward quickly from this point on starting with Monday, with the kids who will be coming back to school.

So, let me do a few things before we go to questions from the media. And the first thing that reminds us all of why we're even able to have this conversation. Because we've all worked together to fight back the coronavirus. And I want to put that in perspective. There's a lot of places in this country, couldn't even get to first base because unfortunately they have not listened to the science and the data or didn't act accordingly. And their situations don't even allow for

consideration of bringing school back. But the people of this city really worked hard at it. So today's indicators again, show how much progress we have made.

So, indicator number one, daily number of people admitted to New York City hospitals for suspected COVID-19, that threshold is 200 patients, today's report 85. And among those 85, the positivity level for COVID-19 confirmed at 9.52 percent. Number two, new reported cases on a seven-day average, threshold of 550 cases, today's report 285. And number three, and most importantly, number of people testing positive citywide for COVID-19, threshold of five percent, today's report again the envy of the nation, 0.87 percent. Let's say a few words in Spanish. And then say one more thing. Before we go to Q and A. In Spanish –

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

So, those words in Spanish every day are a sign of respect and a sign of outreach to millions of New Yorkers who speak Spanish as their first language or one of their languages. And it's important now that I say something in another language, because this is New York City and we are the most diverse and wonderful place in the world. And we celebrate each other and we respect each other. So now I'll turn into another language and say, *Shanah Tovah*, and wish A very, very happy new year to all Jewish New Yorkers and all of us look forward to this new year. And, in fact, we all want a new year, whatever religion or to celebrate. So, this is the first -- we will be very happy to have it. So, *Shanah Tovah* to all. With that, we will turn to our colleagues in the media. And please let me know the name and outlet of each journalist.

Moderator: We will now begin our Q and A. As a reminder, we're joined today by Chancellor Carranza, UFT President Michael Mulgrew, CSA President Mark Cannizzaro, First Deputy Mayor Dean Fuleihan, Commissioner Melanie La Rocca, Dr. Mitch Katz and Senior Advisor Dr. Jay Varma. First question today goes to Juliet from 1010 WINS.

Mayor: Juliet?

Question: Yes, I'm here. Good morning all and good morning Mr. Mayor. Yeah, I'm doing okay. How are you?

Mayor: We're making it happen.

Question: All right. So, my question is this to you and for anybody there on the panel. Given that you're phasing this in now and there seems to – appears to be still safety concerns, what is the most pressing safety concerns that you're seeing? Or is there a repeated problem that is surfacing as you pause on this program?

Mayor: I appreciate the question Juliet and I'll start, and my colleagues can add. Look, we have a pretty rigorous checklist to say the least of things that we have to address. And we've talked about a lot of them. And I feel good about the vast majority of schools on these things, the PPE, the cleaning, the ventilation systems. There's still specific issues that have to be addressed. But I think the thing we all came together on and said really had to be nailed was the staffing level. That this was the area where the specific number had to be agreed on together. And we had to

take a bigger step. And this was something that kind of cut through a lot of other conversations. And bluntly, a lot of other bureaucracy, was just putting the different key figures in one room to have one conversation and really determine what that number was. Because the staffing allows for everything else to work. That would be my answer. And let's see if my colleagues want to add.

President Mulgrew: What we've seen is that everyone here is listening to all the school communities about what's going on. So, at first we had the ventilation issues, which we still have some, but we are – there's clearly, I can report that the City really is on top of them now, in terms of all different independent people going in, checking our school ventilations. And those things while we still have some issues, those things are being worked out right now. The COVID testing, the situation room that was set up over the weekend and went live on Monday. We have seen a major improvement in terms of testing results. We still have a little work to do on the contact tracing, but Dr. Katz and his team have been phenomenal on how that has to work. You know, trying to explain to people the difference between going to an H + H testing facility versus going to a private facility. That's – those are nuances that are really hard for people to understand. But there is a difference on how a case would be reported at that moment. And then it's the proper PPE. Thank God that we have a pretty decent stockpile of all the PPE that is needed. But getting the right PPE in the right school setting is something that should be basically worked out by the beginning of next week. So it's really been more of an exercise -- not an exercise. It's been constant monitoring and listening. And saying, okay, we, you know, this school system is bigger than most cities in the United States. And just think about making sure that everything's right in every building inside of a city. And that's what we're doing right now as a school system. So it really it is about different things at different school communities. But saying that we're here to listen, and we're also here to do our jobs and to make sure that we're doing everything that when you voice a concern and it's real, we're going to be there to help you get through that and make it right.

Mayor: Juliet, go ahead.

Question: Yes. Okay. So, regarding staffing now, remote learning is going to continue. Do you have enough teachers, staffers, you know, however, you're working this out to do the remote learning?

Mayor: I'll start and turn to the Chancellor. Yes. And I want to be clear, remote learning can't do what in-person learning can do, but remote learning has to be as good as it can be. And it will continue to develop and get better as we go along. I truly believe when you're trying a massive, massive endeavor, you have to get started to figure out how to make improvements. You can't do them on a drawing board. You have to get into the work and start figuring out what works and what doesn't. So, yes, we're going to everyone, but I expect with each passing week, it will improve. Go ahead Chancellor.

Chancellor Carranza: I would only add that as we look at remote learning, remote learning has always been a part of the equation for this school year because of the circumstances that we are with a pandemic. So, we – that's the whole point of this week doing the orientation with remote learning, making sure that we have connectivity, make sure students can get on. We've also

curated, working very closely with the UFT, a whole series of curricula that is based in a virtual library, if you will. Where we've set up Google classrooms for teachers that perhaps have never done virtual learning before, so that they can go in, it's a one stop shop. So again, those things will continue to be not only curated and developed, but promulgated. We also have plans and conversations where we're working on very specific things that teachers will do to assist in the development of materials for remote learning. Again, our goal is always to the greatest extent possible, give students real – we call it synchronous, but real people online at the same time. And as we ramp up the school year that that's going to continue to get better. But we've been very honest to say, there has to be some flexibility at the start because we're all trying on a new pair of shoes here in a very different environment.

Mayor: Well said. Okay, go ahead.

Moderator: The next is Dana from the New York Times.

Question: Hi, Mr. Mayor –

Mayor: Hey, Dana, how you doing?

Question: I'm all right. I'm just curious what changed. You know, experts and union leaders have been saying for weeks now that you'd need more educators. I mean, did this have anything to do with complaints about blended learning students not getting live instruction at home? I'm just curious what was the straw that broke the camel's back here?

Mayor: Yeah. Dana, it's a great question. And I'll tell you, you know, as I referred to a few minutes ago, sometimes you have to put the right people in the room and recognize that as earnest as everyone's efforts have been, and they have been throughout the Department of Education, certainly in every school, the information flow about exactly what was needed where, needed to be improved. And when I heard Mark and Michael talk about specific school staffing needs that still were not being resolved in time enough – look, they're leaders, I'm a leader, we're managers. I heard an honest concern, and it just was clear to me that we did not have a clear enough number and that we had to agree to a number that folks who had the ability to hear exactly from every school, what was going on in a different way than the DOE bureaucracy hears, that they had to help us figure out what the true number was and how long it would take to put that number into play. Dana, it's really important to recognize here, there's a lot of talent available. There's a lot of talent available for good reasons, there's so many people who are devoted to our kids and want to teach, there's a lot of talent available for an unfortunate reason that the economy is so bad, that there's a lot of people who have the abilities and are desperate for the opportunity to work. So, we know there's a pool, but we had to get to the true number and the true timeline. And that's what happened in that discussion. It just became clear we had to make an adjustment.

President Mulgrew: Schools are highly resilient entities. Most businesses would collapse if they had to deal with what goes wrong in a school every day, and the school figures it out. When it became apparent – and this where I give the Mayor the credit – when it came apparent, one of the things every school has, is what's known as basically a snow day scenario, when there'll be a

number of children, but a lot of staff or – when you don't have enough staff to deal with the number of children, you put children in large gatherings and put teachers in front of them. When it became apparent, the snow day scenario cannot be used in the pandemic. you cannot put large numbers of children in a room, in an auditorium, and therefore you had to have a teacher in front of every classroom. When the Mayor saw that it was clear, at that moment, he said, this is not acceptable, we are not going to let children in schools be put in that position. So, we have to figure out how we're going to get to a better place, because this is not acceptable. And that's really what happened at that moment. And that was something that when you have an understanding of how the schools actually operate and all of their resiliencies and contingency strategies that they have, and some of those tools are being taken away from them because of the pandemic then we have to recognize that we have to figure out a different way to help and support them, because they don't have the tools that they always had in terms of emergencies and things that pop up.

Mayor: That's right. And I want to add one more thing, and I want to reference what Michael said. It is exactly – it was one of the crucial parts of the conversation. And then something Mark said about when school buses arrive, being able to handle the kids coming off the bus with new realities. Now, of course, we're going to have a lot fewer kids coming off the bus than we normally do, but it was another one of those things that made clear, we've got to account for that more strongly and having additional days for a little more of a phase-in to get that right, this is exactly the kind of just blunt, direct observation from the field that I truly appreciate, you know, just hearing directly from folks who are hearing from the folks at the frontline and laying out what needs to be fixed. And we now figure that – we can now figure out the ways to specifically fix each and every one of these challenges. Go ahead, Dana.

Question: Thank you. On a related note, one of the reasons you were wary of opening indoor dining this month is because you wanted to cushion between that and the reopening of schools. Will this prompt you to push the restart of indoor dining back further into October?

Mayor: No, look, that's a good question, but that's a decision the State made. I understand that decision. As you know, there was some things we had concerns about and we'll continue to look at that really carefully, but particularly the concern I have there is the threshold and making sure when it comes to indoor dining, that we are keeping the city below a two percent level of positivity and, so far, thank God, we are. I am heartened every single day – literally, Dana, one of the first things I do in the morning is check the morning indicators every day. And, you know, it is striking how well we're doing now. We got to keep doing the hard work. But, no, I think we will be able to keep all these pieces moving together.

Moderator: The next is Gloria from NY1.

Question: Good morning. Mr. Mayor, I just want to ask us the three of you, and with all due respect, part of what you just said is sometimes you have to put the right people in the room. We have been hearing about staffing concerns from both unions and teachers for weeks now. You have to put the right people in the room and you're talking about the information flow. So, what can you say to parents today that are watching this and feeling like you are planning by the day, that there hasn't really been a good plan put in place and that you haven't been responding to the

very concerns that the unions have been raising for days? What's going on – what happened here?

Mayor: Gloria, I think our parents – and I was one for a long time in our public schools – they're a lot more pragmatic than you might imagine. New York City public school parents understand we're dealing with an incredibly difficult situation, a really imperfect situation. They understand the real life of the city. Who are the parents of New York City public schools? They are overwhelmingly working class people and lower income people and certainly some middle class people as well. There are overwhelmingly outer-borough residents, they are people who understand the realities of life and they're not shocked when something this difficult has to be adjusted from time to time. But, in truth, of course, I heard those concerns that were raised by the unions and I heard the DOE's response, and I think there was truth on both sides. It's not shocking that you're going to hear folks who advocate for their members asking for something, and then folks who do that work day-to-day of the administration saying, we think we can get this done with less. Their job is to try and get it done with as little as possible for all of our sakes as taxpayers, obviously, and to try and make it efficient and effective. But when I say put the right people in the room, sometimes you got people who are earnestly trying to figure out the right way to do things, but something's not connecting and it's not unnatural. It happens in life and particularly happens in big complex situations and particularly happens in a crisis atmosphere like a pandemic. I've been through it now for months and months. Sometimes you need to cut through it and say, well, wait a minute, I heard you say this, that sounded like too much. And then they'll say, no, what you said was too little and okay, but where is the problem and how do we fix it? And how long will it take? And we just worked it through and came up with a number that we all agreed was viable and doable. And that's why we're moving forward with it. Go ahead.

Question: I guess I just want to pose the same question to the union leaders sitting beside you and ask them directly if they feel that you have been responding to their concerns. Again, staffing is not something that we have been hearing about just this week.

President Cannizzaro: So, obviously we had some disagreements early and yesterday we sat down and the Mayor listened to our concerns.

President Mulgrew: And, in terms of the staffing, yes, we've been speaking about it. But now that the schools – we're actually in the buildings and schools were trying to schedule which students who are actually coming in, which students were going remote, then we, instead of an abstract or a hypothetical that we knew was going to prove true, it actually started to come into actual numbers of teachers that were going to be needed. And once that became apparent, then it was all right, now it is time to move. The plan itself, and I want to be clear here, the plan that we all agreed upon is the right plan. It is the most aggressive with the greatest number of safeguards. That also means it is highly complex to say the least. So, this is our way of saying, in order to stick to the plan, we have to do this. It's not like, oh, we're changing the plan. No, this is our way of saying, in order to stick to the plan, we must do this.

Moderator: The next is Rich Lamb from WCBS.

Question: Good morning. My head is spinning a little bit from all of this. I'm thinking that this sounds an awful lot, like everybody's in a room with a Rubik's cube, trying to figure out how to work this out. Doesn't all of this point in the direction of having eventually to go remote because it's just too complicated to do the blended or in-person?

Mayor: Rich. I appreciate the analogy. Now, people do solve Rubik's cubes, but I want to say, it is really complex. It is tough. If what we wanted to do was the simple, easy thing. We all would have said, hey, let's go all remote, and we know we'll be cheating kids and cheating families. And we know we will be, once again, ignoring the facts that in-person learning is so much better for kids. We know we'll be increasing disparity. That would have been a given. Who does better with remote learning? Families that are privileged, families that have access to all the technology, and everyone is used to working with the technology and people have free time to devote to helping their kids because they're not working a frontline job, because they're not working two jobs. I mean, look, one thing I appreciate about everyone here is everyone has a commitment to social justice. Everyone spent a lot of time with the children and families of New York City. And there wasn't a moment where people said, oh yeah, all remote, that will be just as good or that will be just as fair. It's not. So, we did make the harder choice.

But what I look at here, you can be glass half-empty, Rich, or you can be glass half-full. The way I have kept going throughout this crisis is to always look at what is working. We're moving forward on Monday. There will be kids going into a classroom on Monday, and then the following week, the rest of the kids will go in and the problems are honest problems that deserve an honest solution. We spent hours together yesterday. We, again, we went item after item and Richard and I, Dean Fuleihan we'd pushed back on something, we said, well, why not do it this way? How about this way? Well, wait a minute, that sounds like the wrong way. And people worked it through and got to a point that we said, you know what, that's fair, that makes sense. But it still keeps us moving forward. So, complex and tough, you bet. But we believe, and we know we can do it. Go ahead, Rich.

Question: I'm just wondering whether the union leaders wanted to respond to that as well.

President Mulgrew: Of course, it's complex, but that's why we understand and we agreed to a plan. It's how do we make sure we're sticking to the plan? And, of course, in every phase that we do as we implement, because it's not five school buildings, you know, it's close to 1,800 schools, totally. That as each school comes up with what the issues are, then it's up to us to make sure that we're there with them and helping them figure it out and moving as a school system. Throughout the shutdown between March and June, thousands of teachers in many conversations that I had with the teachers across the city said to me over and over again, if I could just see my student for one or two days a week, the remote instruction would be so much more effective. And I heard that, but I also heard that the need to actually be with their students when they knew they were struggling was really what was at the essence of each of those comments. And we do have a very – as we all know, New York City has a very large student population with so many different challenges. And those ties to those families are so tight that this is what is driving us. And that's the passion that I'm hearing from so many of the teachers across the city, saying, we need to figure this out, and if it's safe, we're good to go, but you have to make sure you're doing everything to make sure that we're safe. And that's why we're here today.

President Cannizzaro: Yeah. So, I think this is more complex than anyone really understands. Not only do we have a staffing issue, a serious staffing issue that we're trying to mitigate against, but we also have numbers that are changing every single day. Students opting from in-person learning to remote learning, teachers and other staff members receiving accommodations that hadn't previously been approved and are now being approved. Our folks have been reprogramming their school buildings, I'm sorry, every single day, if not twice a day, since May or June. So, there has been so many things, so many moving parts. And when my folks continued to tell me that they still don't have the staffing that they need, to me that was the big red flag that if we can't, if we have students entering buildings without a teacher that is simply not going to work. And yesterday, we had a real honest conversation about that and how that wouldn't be good for the system. And we feel that we open this system in a week or so, and we do it right, it's a heck of a lot better than opening it on Monday and not doing it right. So, that's what that was all about. But yes, it's certainly complex, more complex than a Rubik's cube.

Mayor: Amen.

Chancellor Carranza: Mr. Mayor –

Mayor: Go ahead, Rich. I'm sorry –

Chancellor Carranza: Just got one thing. So, I really appreciate the perspectives that you've heard here, but what I want to really emphasize is that all of us feel that the children in New York City are worth it. We could have taken the easy way out. We know some school systems across the country that are putting a camera in a classroom, and you see the teacher walk by the camera. That's not in-person instruction. But I will also tell you that I get a lot of emails. And one in particular was from a mother who also happened to be a frontline medical worker who in March trusted her child to be in one of our regional enrichment centers. And she wrote me this email to thank the City for providing that regional enrichment center experience. And what she said was that she was scared because of what was happening in March. Yet her child blossomed, did great in that regional enrichment center because she had face to face contact with a teacher, with peers.

And with all of the safety precautions that were put in place, there wasn't one issue at that regional enrichment Center. So, she sees why it's important for us to have face to face instruction, in-person instruction. For me, that's the parent's perspective that doesn't always get elevated and we all agree, they're worth it. So, we're going to – even if it's complex and there's a lot of moving pieces and I got to tell you, one of the hardest jobs in America right now is being a principal of a school because of all of these moving pieces, our children are worth it. And that's why we're doing what we're doing.

Mayor: Amen. Amen.

Moderator: The next is Julia Marsh from the Post.

Question: Hey, Mr. Mayor. I absolutely agree with you that our New York City public school parents are pragmatic, but what can you say to them about the absolute whiplash that they're experiencing right now, especially those working class parents who need their kids to go back to school and can't afford child care? And can you guarantee a hundred percent that there will not be another delay after this one?

Mayor: Julia, again, I've spent just so many years talking to parents in this city. And I think they understand we are going through a pandemic. They understand that everyone is working nonstop, trying to fix these really complex problems. And they will – I know they will find a way forward. They always do. We have made a move here, of a few days, to get it right. I think what my colleagues are saying, the plan is the right plan, but we have to make sure it's implemented properly, is exactly right. And that's what parents would want of us. They would want us to get it right. So, it's never easy. I do sympathize and I feel for any parent class to make new arrangements for a few days, come up with something new. It's always hard. I understand that. I've been in that situation myself, you're struggling to find child care. You're struggling to find options. It's not easy, but I know that people will do what they have to do. And then we'll be able to provide that support. I thought what Richard said was really powerful and that's what I hear from parents. So, look, what I can guarantee is if we keep fighting back this disease, we start schools and we go from that point on and we never stop. The one thing we all have to work on is to keep this disease at bay. That's the – ultimately the biggest challenge. These problems we're discussing, we're going to solve. The real challenges to keep the disease at bay so we can keep having that impersonal learning. Go ahead.

Question: And then, you said the biggest – the straw that broke the camel's back here was the number of the staffing levels. We're now at 4,500 – that's still half of what the principal's union said we needed. So, could you and the union leader address whether or not you agree that now 4,500 is adequate, or does the principal's union still think there needs to be more teachers?

Mayor: I'll start and I'll turn to Mark. I mean, look, again, we're all leaders and managers. We're all used to hearing from the people we supervise what they think they need – and I know it's honest, but we're also used to pushing and saying, hey, is there a way we can do that, that maybe is a little more efficient? Is there a way to be a little more creative? We all do that all day long, constantly. And the people of this city and the taxpayers would want that of us. But we also have those moments, every single one of us, we'll say, okay, you know, now, we agree that really does have to happen. Now, the other piece of the equation is what Mark said, we've got about 25 percent of our educators who've received an accommodation. They're all – I believe that process is almost entirely completed at this point. But, you know, that is a real factor. We have had changes in the number of students, there's been adjustments made. But, in the end, what we did yesterday, that was different – was said, okay, let's open up the hood together, all at the same table and go through exactly what we believe is needed, nail a number, commit to that number, mobilize that number, and now we can move forward. We could always learn something new that might cause an additional adjustment. But I think given what we just saw, the sort of everyone looking at it together and agreeing on a number, I feel good that that's the number that makes sense.

President Cannizzaro: I think there are two things. One is that change to some of our students who are in a blended remote model, experiencing some asynchronous learning until such a time when we're able to ramp up even further – that helped with the reduction of one. And the 4,500 number is to get through the 29th, with the K-to-five group. There may be additional when we get to the middle and high school – well, there will be additional need when we get to the middle and high school. So, you know, just those two points of clarification.

Mayor: Go ahead.

Moderator: The next is Lisa Rozner from WCBS TV.

Question: Yes. Hi, Mayor. How are you?

Mayor: Good. How are you doing?

Question: Good. Good. So, I have a question for you. We spoke to a Bay Ridge mom yesterday. Her 10-year-old had her first day of remote learning hijacked with pornography. She's in the sixth grade and this happened five minutes into it. Can you tell me how this happened? Do you know, do you know if it was an outsider or a student? What are the security protocols you're putting in online classrooms so this doesn't happen again? And how are you training teachers?

Mayor: Well, Lisa, I did not hear that until now, and I'm troubled by that and I'm sure every parent would be troubled by that. And I'm very sorry that happened. I will see if the Chancellor or the First Deputy Mayor have any information about that. I mean, we've put very strong cyber protections in for our school system. We had a meeting about that a week or so ago and I know there's very powerful protections in place. I don't know how something like that could happen to an individual student and that obviously worries me and we have to address it. So, Chancellor, and I'll see you after you have Dean has anything to add.

Chancellor Carranza: So, I learned about it early this morning as well. So, this is under investigation. There is no evidence at this point that it's an external hack. It's more of somebody internally within that school that decided to not play by the rules. So, it's being investigated and we should have more to say about that later today.

Mayor: Okay, great. Go ahead, Lisa.

Question: And then, can you talk a little bit more than about the security protocols that you're training teachers for? Especially if you're going to be all remote, starting on the 21st.

Mayor: Look, again, the security precautions have been put in place system-wide and there's always a training provided to our employees to be careful – in all agencies – to be careful about, you know, the rules of the road to how to be secure when it comes to dealing with online work. So, again, I'll turn to the Chancellor, see if you want to add anything about those protocols, or the First Deputy Mayor. Go ahead.

Chancellor Carranza: Sure. So, I'll just add that security, especially in a cyber environment is very, very important. As the Mayor has mentioned, we've been working very, very closely with

the city and the experts. We have put up firewalls, if you recall, back in March, when we pivoted – we actually took the Zoom platform down, because we were very concerned with external vulnerabilities. We've now completely – it's back up and running because we've built in the kind of security that, that is very, very much what we feel state-of-the-art in preventing an external hack. Now, teachers also have guidelines and principals have protocols that they put in place as well. When you have mischievous students that decide not to follow the rules and how they deal with that. But, again, at this point, we feel very secure about the external threat being mitigated. And now, it's really – this is what all of this orientation is all about. How do you create your virtual classroom? How do you instill what the working rules of engagement are going to be, etcetera, etcetera.

Mayor: Thank you. Dean, anything to add?

First Deputy Mayor Fuleihan: No –

Mayor: You're good? Okay, go ahead.

Moderator: We have time for two more for today. The next is Katie Honan from the Wall Street Journal.

Question: Hey, good morning, everybody here. I have two questions, obviously. The first is about teaching staffing. I feel like I've been asking you this question for weeks. It hasn't changed. It's been alerted to you, the DOE, by the unions for weeks that they need staffing, and now we have 4,500, but the CSA president said to me 10,000. I may have failed every math regent in high school, but I know that that doesn't add up. So, can you explain the staffing shortages and ensure that schools will open in-person to the new timeline you just announced an hour ago with those staffing – with schools staffed up?

Mayor: Yeah, again, Katie, I think we've heard from Mark, that in addition to the changes that we've seen in the specific compositions of schools, the fact that we changed the model to synchronous learning for the initial period to relieve some of that pressure, there have been specific adjustments made, and, of course, the 2,000 teachers that we announced a few days back, but we agreed that more were needed and we're moving those into place. And the important point here is that there is a ready reserve of educators who want to do this work and are ready to deploy immediately and do this work. So, as you just heard, the original concerns that came from the CSA were changed based on the reality on the ground. Some of what we thought could be done were changed, those assumptions were changed by the reality on the ground. We're going to keep working to get it right, but this is a number we all agreed on would give us what we need to get started. Please –

President Cannizzaro: So, there were – it's a combination of changes. So, I understand this has been a second question, driving at the numbers. So, right now, what you're looking at is, there have been policy changes in terms of our ability to do synchronous and asynchronous instruction. That has – it was a very creative way to start dealing with some of the staffing challenges. That absolutely helped mitigate some of it. At the same time, this number is specifically what we think we need to get moving right now on pre-K, 3-K, District 75, and K-to-

eight education. We're going to do another analysis later in the week on middle schools and high schools. But it's a combination of policy changes, being creative with ways we can deliver effective instruction. As the Chancellor said before, we are not going to be a school system that puts a camera in the middle of a classroom and you see a teacher every once in a while, walking in front of the camera. We will not give that type of horrible instruction to the students of New York City, no way. Those are just school districts who have just mailed it in and have not – it's about them – politics – it's not about effective instruction. And we're going to keep moving on making sure that the staffing is right, but it's a combination of policy changes, how to come up with really creative instructional ways to deliver effective instruction, and constantly analyzing the need, especially now, as we move. We want to see what the middle schools and high schools at doing now with these new tools that we're providing them and then we'll analyze to see what the need is at those two levels of our school system.

Mayor: Go ahead, Katie.

Question: My second question is about the quality of instruction from substitutes, from grad students. What's going to happen? You know, teachers spend a lot of time on their lesson plans. They work lesson plans out through the year, what are they going to teach. If you have teachers – you don't even know – some teachers – there could be teachers that starts in two weeks, they don't even know yet where they're going to be. How does that work? And also, Mayor, I've heard from public school parents who live in the outer boroughs, who are Black and Brown, and they are maybe sick of being told they're pragmatic and tough and they're very upset about these changes. So, what's your response to that?

Mayor: Again, Katie, you can raise the concerns and I respect it, but I'm telling you, I've spent my life working with the same parents and I know people understand what we're dealing with here and that our job is to get it right, but to get it safe and to make sure we can provide a quality education. Look, I've spoken to so many parents who want exactly what Richard said from that very powerful example you gave – a frontline worker who the one thing she needed to know was that her child would get that support in the classroom. It's our obligation to make it work, but we have to make it work under extremely adverse circumstances. And we have to make sure it's safe for everyone. It's not easy to do, but I am absolutely convinced that everyone's working together to get it done and we will get it done. It's as simple as that. Go ahead.

Moderator: Last question for today goes to Michael Gartland from the Daily News.

Question: Good morning, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor: Hey, Michael. How are you?

Question: I'm good. I wanted to get back to Katie's questions and Gloria's questions. You know, I hear similar things from parents. I'm a public school parent myself, and, you know, I guess you've known that this is going to be an issue for a while now. And you said today that you guys are just getting in the room yesterday with all the, kind of, key players. Why did it take so long to do that? And do you feel like at this point you owe public school parents an apology for all this

kind of – one of the questioners described it as kind of a whiplash scenario that public school families have been experiencing.

Mayor: Again, Michael, I'll try again. So, again, I love this school system deeply. I really do. It's been such an important part of the life of my family. I mean, for me, it all springs from that. My kids went pre-K-to-12 New York City public schools – everything good that they got from our public schools, it would take all day for me to list it all to you. I feel a tremendous devotion to the parents of this city, because I've walked in their shoes, and I feel a personal devotion to the educators and the staff of our schools, because I've seen what they've done for my own family, but I've also seen what they've done for thousands of thousands of others. I've spent so much time in the schools over decades that, to me, this is the wellspring of so much of what is good in New York City. It has to work. I know everyone here, and thousands and thousands of other people have been devoted to getting it right, but it's extremely difficult. So, yeah, of course we heard the concerns. We all worked on those concerns. And as you listen carefully, you'll hear even folks who are strong advocates for their members say, yeah, there were adjustments and changes, like that change on synchronous learning. That was a change to try and address the reality we were facing as we saw more and more information coming in, more and more of the reality, we made adjustments. The numbers keep changing, because we're in a pandemic. The reason the numbers keep changing is all because of the pandemic reality. It wouldn't be changing in a normal school year. So, I have to say, I think I can say this on behalf of the Chancellor, and President Cannizzaro, and President Mulgrew, and everyone is working so hard every day at the DOE, and all the folks working in our schools – everyone is trying, everyone's given it their all, it's incredibly difficult, but, you know what? It's going to happen. It's going to happen. And I think parents, again, can see that they know everyone's trying against adverse circumstances. And I think the vast majority of parents appreciate that we're trying to bring back schools for their kids rather than giving up. And I think there's a lot of places that did give up and we won't give up. Go ahead, Michael.

Question: Second question has to do with this IBO report that came out this morning on this \$32 million in additional cost per week to fund the schools. So, I'm wondering, I guess – one, do you view that as an accurate assessment from the IBO? And two, how is the City accounting for that kind of additional expenditure? Is that factored into the – baked into the budget or does it have to get baked into the budget? If you could just give us a sense of, kind of, the budgeting on like additional costs with all these extra teachers that the schools need.

Mayor: Sure. I'll start, then I'll turn to Dean Fuleihan, because in addition to being our First Deputy Mayor and someone who's been working literally every hour to make sure that our schools come back strong, he also happened to formally be our budget director. So, he can speak to the whole picture. But I'll start by saying this, what I've said to the team is we're going to provide the resources it takes. This is essential to everything. You heard what I said at the beginning, how much I believe that public education is the essence of so much of what we have to do in this city any year. But in this year in particular, we have got to get it right for our kids. They lost a lot in the four months of last year when education just wasn't the same. They lost a lot of ground and the kids who needed the help the most lost the most ground. We have to get it right. It's worth it. The story that Richard said so powerfully, it's worth it for that family. It's worth it for all families. It costs money, but it's worth it. The simple answer is, it's a budget

priority and some of the expenses were accounted for an initial projection and, if there's new ones, we're going to have to find that within the DOE budget, we're going to have to make other cuts and changes if that's what it takes, but it's a budget priority. Go ahead, Dean.

First Deputy Mayor Fuleihan: No, that's exactly correct. We have existing resources that we're applying to these additional – to the additional staffing and we're making available an additional \$50 million to make sure that this is completely accomplished and we'll obviously find savings and we'll reflect those in the future financial plans.

Mayor: Okay. Thank you very much. Everyone, look, as we conclude today, I'll just say what I truly believe why, to me – and I would use a word like sacred and you might think that's too strong a word, but for me, it's not too strong a word. Our public schools are sacred. They are the foundation of what's good in our society. And this city, for generations, has believed that every child deserves the same opportunity and really strive to make our public school system what it should be for every single child. And we still have work to do for sure, but I can tell you honestly, over the last seven years, the devotion to getting it right in the whole of the Department of Education and with our colleagues in labor has been extraordinary. And everyone wants to get right for every child. They don't want to leave out kids. They don't want to leave out a child because of what ZIP code they live in. They don't want to leave out a school that was historically lacking investment. I mean, this is something we really need to understand that pervades this whole discussion today. The fact that for a long time in this city, some schools got it all, others didn't. Some communities got it all, others didn't. Public education did not get the full investment it deserved, but we are now living up to our ideals and actually trying to make public education everything it can and should be. So, I want to say thank you to all the educators and all the school staff and everyone at the DOE. I want to say thank you, because they won't stop fighting. They never stopped fighting. They're trying to do it right for our kids and families. And I want to say, thank you to our kids and families, because they've been through hell, but they keep trying to get it right and they don't give up, because they're New Yorkers. And I want to say it as squarely as this, the future of New York City depends on our public schools, period. That's why we are doing what we are doing, because we owe it to the future of this city. Thank you, everybody.

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