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**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO ANNOUNCES RECORD HIGH GRADUATION
RATE**

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Well it is great to be here with you everyone. And first of all I do not believe that Brianne is shy okay. Brianne, I don't know why you say that, I think you are incredibly poised and well-spoken and I really admire everything that you have achieved – we got to speak a little bit earlier and you've done great work as a student and you have a bright, bright future ahead as well. Let's give Brianne and big round of applause.

[Applause]

Now I want to find out about if what Brianne said about all the administrators and teachers is right. So if you think that your principle and your assistant principals and your teachers are doing a great job, give them a big round of applause right now.

[Applause]

Alright that was – Deputy Chancellor that was their performance review right there. They did really well. I want to – to all of you it is great to be here with you. You are the future of New York City. And when I hear Brianne say that you know how much the adults in this building care about you and believe in you and know that your future is bright and they communicate to you that your future is bright, that's so beautiful to hear. There were too many times I think, in the history of this City where young people didn't received that message that they deserved to receive.

So if it's happening here, you are being valued and respected and told what you are capable of – that makes me very, very happy. Because that says that we are all building a better kind of society right here in this building.

So to everyone at South Bronx Prep you have a lot to be proud of for what's been created here. And I am going to go over some of your achievements in a moment but I just wanted to let you know – when you see this kind of success, it's everyone who is a part of it – the principle, the assistant principals, the teachers, everyone who works in the building, the parents, but the students, no one creates the atmosphere more than the students. So you are obviously taking a lot

of ownership in your own lives by coming to a place like this and excelling and creating this kind of positive atmosphere. So now I want you to give each other a round of applause.

[Applause]

And there is a lot to be proud of here – I want to just by name thank Dr. Flanagan for her great leadership. I want to thank Ms. Martin for her great work guiding people to college. I want to thank Ms. Halstead for her wonderful work as one of the first single shepherds in this new program that we created that we think is going to make a huge difference for families. And also representing the union that represents all of our administrators and supervisors, CSA, I want to thank Laverne Burrowes for being here representing CSA. Let's give them all a round of applause.

[Applause]

And I know Chancellor Fariña is out of town but our Deputy Chancellor Phil Weinberg – I want to thank you and the whole leadership of the DOE and all the teachers, everyone, the principles, everyone across the whole school system because what we are going to talk about today is a success that has happened in all five boroughs and I want to thank you for your leadership and the whole team, let's give him a great round of applause for that.

[Applause]

So I sat in that classroom earlier with Brianne and other students and to see high school students talking about the kinds of subjects you're going to have in college – to see high school students doing college level work was very inspiring to me, and talking about the issues that are so crucial in today's society, the topic of gender and how to interpret gender – what that means for our lives, what that means for kind of society we should have, how everyone is respected in a modern society.

It was a really powerful conversation. I spoke with five students and I heard a singular intelligence and energy and focus. And that's happening right here. I kind of wish every New Yorker could have seen that dialogue because it would have been really inspiring to them – but when you see high school students doing college level work, that is entirely inspiring and that's what is happening right here in the South Bronx at South Bronx Prep.

I have to tell you it is particularly moving to me because when I came into office four years ago, we knew one thing very clearly. We couldn't accept the status quo in this city. We couldn't accept the status quo in education. We couldn't accept the notion of so many young people not getting an opportunity to fulfill their potential. What I saw in the classroom today is an example of what's happening more and more around the city and it has to keep happening, we have to deepen – every young person being able to find out just what they are capable of. Because historically, again so much talent never got unlocked and so many young people didn't get that opportunity to be what they wanted to be. We are at a point where we can get to fundamentally change that.

And that is so exciting. And you know, it won't shock anyone in this room that for a long time the kind of education you got, the quality of education was determined by zip code. You know it was determined by how much money your family had, what neighborhood you lived in.

Our job is to end that. Our job is to create something more fair and equal and in fact bring all schools up in the process. That's why we call the vision Equity and Excellence.

And we are seeing it more and more take effect. And what we are talking about today is so powerful because the results I'm going to talk about today apply to every borough and kids of every background. We see consistent progress across the board. So today we are announcing the results we have been waiting for – what happened the last school year and what it tells us about how our young people are doing and how our schools are doing. And I'm happy to tell you that this is a great day for New York City because this vision of Equity and Excellence is becoming a reality. So when the school year that ended in the summer of 2017 more kids in New York City graduated high school in four years than ever before in the history of New York City.

[Applause]

We are now at an all-time high, an all-time record graduation rate of 74.3 percent. And that's something everyone should be proud of. That is an eight point increase from just four years ago. So it proves to you how quickly things can change. One of the things I always talk about is change does not have to take a long time. You know, there's that old saying 'where there's a will, there's a way'. We have the will here in the city to keep making change. The fact that we could move the graduation rate up eight points in just four years shows how much more is possible going forward.

Now here at South Bronx Prep, the number is a little different. And it is extraordinary – the graduation rate at the end of the last school year of 96 percent.

[Applause]

And we're here in the South Bronx. And a lot of people hear the word South Bronx and they might have certain assumptions and stereotypes, but you are disproving all of that. A 96 percent goes far beyond anything that's happening in this whole nation. That's an amazing, stunning graduation rate. And this school has achieved something powerful – and by the way, that is a 10 point increase in just four years. Isn't that amazing? And everyone in this room should be proud of that fact.

Now, the other side of the coin – for decades in this city we had an astounding, troubling drop-out rate. It meant kids who didn't make it and never got a chance to fulfil their potential. I am proud to tell you based on last school year's data that we now have the lowest drop-out rate in the history of New York City.

[Applause]

That – that number is now 7.8 percent. We are not going to accept that number, we are going to keep driving it down. But 7.8 percent – that's fully three points lower than just four years ago which means that drop-out rate is descending and descending and we're going to keep pushing it down because every kid deserves the opportunity. Now you might ask the question, what is the drop-out rate for South Bronx Prep? Well I'm pleased to report to you for the second year in a row the drop-out rate was zero.

[Applause]

And I want to interpret that, that means that almost every kid graduated on time in the four years. Some kids needed a little more, but no child left school. No child disconnected. This school stuck with the kids and the kids stuck with the school and every child will ultimately succeed. That is a powerful, powerful example for this city and this whole nation. That's what you're achieving here.

Now, here's the next fact I want to share with you because there are many ways to succeed in life. For some young people – for a lot of young people it means going to college whether it's two years or four years. For some young people it means going into the workforce. There are many good ways to succeed. We want to support every option. But we certainly want to see as many young people as want to go to college have that opportunity and not have barriers put in front of them. So, I'm proud to tell you that we now can say that for the class of 2016 we had the record enrollment in college in the history of New York City. 57 percent of the class of 2016 is going – has gone to college. That is a good thing.

[Applause]

And that is a six point increase from 2013. Everything's going the same direction. That's what so good to see. Every borough, people of every background, the trend is so powerful and so clear. And there's a lot of energy going into it. Students, parents, teachers, administrators, everyone is pushing in the same direction recognizing that we can reach so many more kids.

So, look, our job is to keep building and we've seen the things that work. The AP classes, providing advance placement courses in every high school, not just some because in the past there were some high schools that got AP and a whole lot of others didn't get any. Now every high school will have AP classes because kids in every zip code deserve that chance. If you can do college-level work you – first of all it's going to help you get into a good college. Second of all, you're not going to need as many credits potentially in that college and you can save some money. But also what it does for your mind and for the opportunity. And we want to say that to every child in every school. So AP classes for all, computer science for all is being brought to our schools. What we're going with pre-K and 3-K. All of these things moving in the same direction. Let's make sure every kid gets on the path that's right for them. And that's what we're seeing is possible now.

So, I want to just do a very quick summary in Spanish, and then I want to turn to one more speaker who is a crucial ally in this work and let him speak to you about what this day means for him. Quickly in Spanish –

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

Congratulations to all.

[Applause]

And I mentioned we have one special guest, and why I have to tell you, everything I just told we've been doing, we've been doing with the support and the backing of the City Council. Could not do this alone. The City Council has been right there every step of the way. There's a new chairman of the education committee in the City Council, so he has a very big impact on our schools and their future. And I am very happy to report that he is not just doing this job because he's interested, he's doing this job as chairman of the education committee because he actually was a teacher. And he actually served the kids of this city and he actually knows what he's talking about and that is refreshing in government. So it's my pleasure to introduce the Chair of the Education Committee Mark Treyger.

[...]

Mayor: So, I just want to conclude by saying I'm so proud of you guys. I'm so impressed. You're now all ambassadors for New York City. You know, and everything you're going to be doing up ahead in your life, you reflect the city you come from. And I cannot think of a better group of ambassadors because you show us everything good about this city and everything good in our future ahead. Congratulations to all of you.

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