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**MEDIA CONTACT:** [pressoffice@cityhall.nyc.gov](mailto:pressoffice@cityhall.nyc.gov), (212) 788-2958

**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO HOLDS MEDIA AVAILABILITY**

**Mayor Bill de Blasio:** Well, good morning, everybody. And as I'm sure so many of you have heard, and we're going to talk today about our kids, our schools, our parents, our families, because it's official, the State of New York has cleared a New York City public schools to start in September. So, we are getting ready every single day. We're going to talk to you today about all the preparations being made to keep people healthy and safe, to make sure we can educate our kids as best possible under the toughest conditions, but so many good people are working overtime to get ready for the beginning of the school to serve well over 700,000 students who will be joining us at least part of the week in-person. And we're going to go over the details of that plan in just a moment, but first we've got an immediate situation we should talk about for a moment, and that's the heat advisory that will be in effect today. So, the hot weather is back, and I say to everyone – pay attention to mother nature, respect mother nature, take these advisories seriously. So, today, we expect heat index values up to 97 degrees. And this heat advisory will be in effect today through Wednesday evening. So, we have three days of it. And the message, as always, stay safe, stay cool. Take the steps to protect yourself, particularly if you are vulnerable. So, City cooling centers will be open across all five boroughs, starting at noon today. We will have cooling buses available to provide additional relief. We're going to make sure when people come to a cooling center that we deal with the other challenges we face. So, there will be social distancing, there will be face coverings. Anyone to needs place to get to that is cool today, tomorrow, Wednesday, you can go online [nyc.gov/chillout](http://nyc.gov/chillout), or, of course, call 3-1-1.

The Cool Streets initiative will also be open today. And it's very important to know, great alternative for families and kids to get out there, there's sprinklers, there's other cooling options. And then, lastly, as I say every time, New Yorkers are good compassionate people, look out for your neighbors. If there's someone in your building, if there's someone on your block you know as vulnerable, a senior or someone else who might need some extra help and checking in during the hot weather, please look out for them.

Okay. Now, let's talk about schools. I have to tell you, I've said this for years, I feel it deep in my heart, not just as mayor, I feel as a parent – first day of school is a magical day and there's an incredible sense of renewal and energy and possibility each year as school begins. Again, it's literally maybe my favorite day of the year, but I think for a lot of kids, a lot of families, a lot of parents, it's an extraordinary day. This year is going to be different. We all know it. And I'm going to say it now and I'll say it a lot of times in the coming months, we are up against a challenge, but it's not a challenge that's going to go on forever. At some point, likely in the course of this school year, there will be a vaccine. That vaccine will be administered to kids and families all over New York City, and then we can start getting back to something more normal.

But for the foreseeable future, it's going to be a very different kind of school year, but it does not take away the excitement, the energy, the possibility, and the meaning for our kids. Our kids have been yearning to reconnect with school, with their friends, with so many teachers and other mentors they depend on. We're going to do it differently. It's going to feel very different, smell it, look very different – focus on face coverings for all kids and adults, social distancing at all times, constant cleaning. There's a lot of things that will change, but what will not change is our fundamental commitment to our children. And our educators, our school staff every day, every year, that's their commitment. No matter what times we're in, they focus on the safety of kids, they focus on the wellbeing of kids, they focus on the development of kids and the education of our children. That's what they do for a living. That's the path they chose in life. And I want to just thank our educators and everyone who works in our school buildings. It doesn't matter if you work in the cafeteria or you're a custodian – whoever you are, you contribute to that school community and you care about kids. People made the choice to go into that field because they believe in you people, they want to help them. And young people need those positive adult role models and that support and they're finally going to get it again as school comes back. Now, if you look around the country, you see a challenging situation. I am the first to acknowledge it. And if you look at what's happening in other places, it probably causes you a certain amount of concern and a certain amount of doubt. But we're not those other places. I feel for them. I hope and pray that their situation improves soon, but we're not those other places. New York City is different. Everyone around the country can see how different New York City is. In New York City, we have proven that we could beat back this disease now for a fully two months, and we're going to keep doing it. In New York City, the virus rate has been under three percent for two months running, extraordinarily low. In New York City, over 700,000 kids are planning to come back as soon as school begins. We're different and we're ready. So, we're the only major school district in America – the only major urban school district planning for in-person classes this fall. And look, we've been very clear – we must do it safely, we can do it safely. We've set very stringent standards. We have to meet those standards. If at any point the situation changes, I'll be the first to say it. But so long as we can meet those standards, we're going to be ready to serve our kids in September.

Now, I want to speak as a parent. I know for the entire time our kids were growing up, for Chirlane and I, literally most important thing every single day was the health and safety of our kids. I know every parent is thinking that. As a parent, we're moving forward. I can tell you I've given the order to move forward only if we can do it safely and effectively in a way that keeps our kids healthy. I know we can. I've seen the preparations, they are outstanding, and we are going to keep doing that work. We've got a whole month before school begins and we are going to keep doing that work every single day. Now, we talked about a survey we did of parents weeks ago, and we said roughly a three-quarters of our parents wanted their kids back in school. Well, now, we gave parents a very specific opportunity to decide, did they want to opt out in the first instance and have their kids do remote. The facts now, based on the actual opportunity for parents to make a decision came back almost exactly the same as our survey, striking consistency. And now we know 74 percent of our students planning to participate in in-person learning, blended learning, starting next month. A lot to do, and I'm going to turn to the Chancellor with tremendous gratitude to him and his team. They have been working endlessly since March to get ready the schools in a way they know is safe. Everyone involved, thinking about health and safety all the time. And we're asking them to do a massive logistical task, but

every step along the way people have said we can do this. And with that great spirit, we're moving forward.

So, I want to thank you, Chancellor, and would welcome your update.

**Schools Chancellor Richard Carranza:** Thank you, Mr. Mayor. So, I know that every family wants the best for their child. They want their kids to be safe. They want them to be healthy. They want them to be happy. And they want their children to always be learning and growing and getting to getting ready to take on the world. Our schools play such an important role in that, especially now when our children of our city have been through so, so much. For us, health and safety leads the way always, first and foremost. Our vision for the fall is a safe, strong, and supportive learning environment and an excellent education for every one of our students. Schools will be in session five days per week. Students will be learning five days per week, no matter where they are. We know a lot more now about how that's going to work because healthy and safe in-person learning means knowing how many people we need to plan for in buildings. We know that nearly three-quarters of our students, over 700,000, will begin the school year in a blended learning mode. This means that they'll learn in-person in a school building part of the school week and continue learning remotely from home for the rest of the week. As the Mayor indicated, as of now, 26 percent of our families will begin the year in fully remote learning mode. This is consistent with what families told us earlier in the year about their preferences. Additionally, we know that, as of now, we can expect about 85 percent of our teacher workforce or about 66,000 educators to be teaching in a blended mode as well. About 15 percent of our teachers have requested a reasonable accommodation to work from home. Those who are granted that accommodation will exclusively teach remotely, but they are – they will still be engaged and devoted as ever to educating the children of New York City, because that's who they are. These are educators who, in a matter of days, completely transformed teaching in the biggest school district in the country back in March. They have grit, they have compassion, and a dedication to their students that amazes me every single day.

With all this information at hand, we continue to develop school level plans for every public school in New York City, the nation's largest school system, and that is thanks to the tireless work of our principals. Each one of our principals is blazing an entirely new path for their schools, leading teams of fellow dedicated professionals, hustling all summer to make sure that families are on track to get the information that they need. To all of our families and students and all of New Yorkers, I want to say, thank you. It's been your hard work that has made it even possible for us to consider in-person learning. You continue to show what it means to persevere, to keep your eye on the prize, and serving the young people who not long from now will be the ones that will be leading our city.

Mr. Mayor?

**Mayor:** Thank you so much, Chancellor. So, so much work going into getting ready for next month. And what I have seen day-in and day-out is an extraordinary team at Department of Education. These are folks who have devoted their whole lives to kids. And today, we're going to introduce a newly christened member of the team in a new role, but he is not new to the DOE in any way, shape, or form. In fact, started out from the very beginning of his education as a

kindergartener at PS 31 in the South Bronx, has worked his way up over 37 years in the Department of Education. So, talk about a homegrown talent – my pleasure to introduce our new First Deputy Chancellor Donald Conyers. Welcome and congratulations, Donald.

**First Deputy Chancellor Donald Conyers, Department of Education:** Thank you so much, Mr. Mayor. It's an honor to be here this morning. When I began my experience in New York City public schools in 1968 as a kindergartener at a Public School 31, I could not know that I would be 52 years later having the opportunity to serve all of the schools as First Deputy Chancellor. That morning in 1968, my mother, who was also a New York City public school teacher sent me into the classroom and it changed the course of my life. By the time I graduated from Beach Channel High School in the Rockaways in 1979, public school had already shaped who I am both in my experiences as a student and in the powerful form of my mother. I'm a mama's boy and always have been. My story is emblematic of what public schools can provide for children – opportunity, pure and simple. It has been a change factor for me and my entire family. Education is the key to advancement, and my entire career has been about ensuring that the children and other families reap its benefits too. I left the Department of Education for four years to go to college and returned in 1983 and began my service to the system that has served me so very well. My career, as the Mayor indicated, 37 years so far began as a special education teacher in Midwood, Brooklyn. Then it was back to the Bronx, as an assistant principal, and the principal, and then a superintendent – all before coming to central and toting that wealth of experience with me, all tied to learning leadership and achievement.

The First Deputy Chancellor's job is to execute the Chancellor's vision and to help make our schools the best that they can be. The job is to be the connective tissue that links every school to the things that they need from our superintendents, executive superintendents, and central offices. My job is to guide challenge and support our principals and schools just as I was challenged, guided, and supported. I'm still in touch with my elementary school principal, Carol Russo, and my 10th grade geometry teacher, Donna Davis. I talked to my mother, affectionately known as Molly, who's now retired for more than 30 years as an educator. I talk to her every week. Through them, I learned that every – that you can believe in people to make everything better. That is why I'm here for our children today. And I thank you, again, Mr. Mayor, for the opportunity.

**Mayor:** Thank you so much, Donald. Congratulations. And I want to give a shout out to your mom – mom, you've done good with Donald. And also, your teachers way back when, who you're still in touch with – I love that story. And this is what New York City public schools are all about, that sense of connection that people feel, that sense of every kid being special and every kid being precious – that's what we're going to start again with a lot of energy and passion next month. So, thank you. And congratulations.

Now, let me turn to a very different topic, but also right in the front of our minds, because as much as every New Yorker absolutely should feel proud of our response to the coronavirus and the fact that this city has led the way in the nation in coming back, we have so often been on our own and we should not be happy about that, and I know no one is. Why has New York City had to so often fight it alone, go it alone? Because our federal government hasn't been there. The federal government hasn't been there from the very beginning. And now, as we are facing these

huge challenges, huge economic problems, budget problems, once again, the federal government is failing to get the job done. So, while the stimulus talks are stalled in Washington, we are going to keep going. And we're going to turn to our colleagues in Albany and talk about the things that will help New York City to move forward, keep the services for people all over the city that we depend on. Every New Yorker depends on the City government to serve them every single day. We've got to keep that going. We've got to keep our public employees on their jobs. And to do that, we need the State of New York to help us with a long-term borrowing plan – a fiscally responsible, smart plan that will help us bridge this moment in history. By the way, it happened before, right after 9/11 – the State Legislature urgently, immediately gave New York City that borrowing authority so New York City could keep moving forward. And that's exactly what happened. In fact, the city came back stronger than ever. That is what is going to happen again in the coming years, if we get that help and support. So, again, let's work together to bridge this moment in time and come back stronger.

Let's talk about our daily indicators now. Number one, daily number of people admitted to hospitals for suspected COVID-19, that threshold is 200 patients – and today's report, 53. Number two, daily number of people in Health + Hospitals, ICU threshold 375 – today, 285. And number three, percentage of people testing positive citywide for COVID-19, threshold, 15 percent – today's report, excellent, one percent. Once again, New Yorkers keep showing toughness and resolve to beat back this disease.

A few words in Spanish –

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

With that, we will turn to our colleagues in the media and please let me know the name and outlet of each journalist.

**Moderator:** Hi, all. Joining us today, we have Schools Chancellor Carranza, First Deputy Chancellor Conyers, Emergency Management Commissioner Criswell, and Senior Advisor Dr. Jay Varma. And with that, I'll start with Andrew Siff from WNBC.

**Question:** Hey. Good morning, Mayor, and everyone on the call. Hope you're doing well. When your school's plan came out, the teacher's union found fault with the problem of not having a nurse in every school building. I'm wondering, with the coronavirus response plan involving a student who doesn't feel well going to the nurse, does this plan really makes sense if you're missing hundreds of nurses?

**Mayor:** Andrew, great question. We are working on that right now, and I'm hopeful we're going to find a solution in the coming days. It's a real concern. I think there's a number of ways we can get the personnel we need. And on top of having the medical personnel available to each school, we're going to have a very strong presence in our schools, from the Test and Trace Corps as well, to make sure in the event of any case that there's immediate follow-up at the school level. So, more to say on that in just the next few days. Go ahead.

**Question:** My second question, and maybe the Chancellor can weigh in on this timetable. You've got 700,000 kids now who have indicated a willingness to attend in-class, but if you talk to many of those families they'll say with a giant asterisk, I don't even know what the schedule is. I don't know how many days my kid will be there. I don't know how many cohorts there are. So, when will families be told what the exact plan is for their school?

**Mayor:** I'll start and turn to the Chancellor, because, as a parent myself, I've had this conversation with the Chancellor's team many times and said parents need to know. So, starting next Monday, the 17th, you'll start to get those announcements going out to schools. Many families and kids will have those announcements next week, the remaining we'll have them the week after. Chancellor, do you want to add?

**Chancellor Carranza:** Just very briefly. So, typically, in a typical, normal school year, those schedules go out in the weeks before the start of the school year. Obviously, this isn't a typical school year. Just keep in mind that just this Friday was the window for requesting accommodations for staff. That's new information now that principals have to program their buildings. This Friday was also the deadline for indicating complete remote learning for families. So, now, principals have that information as well. So, as I mentioned in my comments, principals are really burning the midnight oil and feel a sense of urgency to get that information to families. And, as the Mayor has said, that'll be starting on Monday.

**Moderator:** Next up, we have Ayana Harry from WPIX.

**Question:** Hi, good morning. I hope everyone is doing well. Was hoping the Mayor and Schools Chancellor to talk a little bit about the process of finding alternate sites for remote learning. I've seen some sites put out there from cathedrals to, you know, large Chinese restaurants. What's that process looking like, and what are some of the creative spaces we might see students learning in this year?

**Mayor:** Thank you, Ayana, I'll start and if the Chancellor or First Deputy Chancellor want to add, they'll jump in. Look it's also a conversation we're having constantly. School Construction Authority leading the way, Lorraine Grillo and her team, and the focus really, Ayana, has been on facilities that fit education best. So, for example, we've been working with the archdiocese and the diocese to use some former Catholic school buildings. Those are the ideal facilities for expanding out. We also need facilities that are close as possible to the schools that kids normally go to. So, we're finding some success. There's a separate effort to also find space for childcare, to support parents who need kids in childcare on the days their kids are not in person learning. So, it's moving aggressively, but I think it's fair to say for school facilities, the things that are most like schools are needed for a variety of reasons for childcare, there's a little more flexibility. Want to add?

**Schools Chancellor Carranza:** That was well done.

**Mayor:** Thank you, I got my grade for the day. Okay, go ahead, Ayana.

**Question:** Nope, that's it. Thank you.

**Mayor:** Thank you.

**Moderator:** Next up we have Reema from Chalkbeat.

**Question:** Hi, Mr. Mayor and Chancellor Carranza. I wanted to ask you about ventilation. You – you know, you said that you guys are taking a lot of health and safety measures and we've seen the various plans you've put out. But it seems like a lot of people still have questions about exactly how the DOE is going to be able to improve ventilation systems at schools. We know that hundreds need you know, some sort of fixing or upkeep. And so I wanted to know just, you know, how you're going to be able to do that in the next month and are you going to be releasing new inspection reports to sort of, you know, prove to families and teachers that that work has been done?

**Mayor:** Yeah. Great question. Bottom line is we're on a war footing here and everyone in the school building is working with extraordinary energy, including the custodial teams, School Construction Authority, everyone, to maximize health and safety in the building, and ventilation is absolutely a part of the puzzle here. Look, there's a small number of classrooms that there's been some issues with, if the classroom is not ready, that classroom simply will not be used. So I want to affirm that to all parents, if any classroom we feel is not fit, we simply won't use it. We'll just segment it off and keep going until we do feel it's ready to go. But the bigger point is this, with a month to go, and the focus on health and safety now has been out there for months previous, the whole school team is working to improve every piece of the equation, including not just what we can do with ventilation systems, but one of the things that doctors have said to us. It's really interesting, Reema, from the very beginning that top medical folks have said, the best thing to do in good weather is open the windows. And we will be doing that in classrooms to the maximum extent possible on top of other types of ventilation.

**Chancellor Carranza:** I would only add that we're very cognizant of the month, but this has been happening all summer where our maintenance crews have been upgrading the ventilation and ventilation filters. And as the Mayor said – and I want to double down on what the Mayor said – if there is any classroom that is not fit, we will not use that classroom, i.e. why we're exploring alternate locations as well.

**Moderator:** Next up, we have Liliana from Univision.

**Mayor:** Liliana?

**Question:** Can you hear me?

**Mayor:** Yeah.

**Question:** Good morning, everyone. I wanted to ask Chancellor Carranza if he can give us this update in Spanish for our Hispanic community?

[Schools Chancellor Carranza speaks in Spanish]

**Mayor:** Liliana, you have a follow-up?

**Question:** Yes, so I know you already answered this question, but if also can give me this answer in Spanish is for the teachers and parents who still are worried about the ventilation in the classrooms?

**Mayor:** Please?

[Schools Chancellor Carranza speaks in Spanish]

**Moderator:** Next up we have Rich Lamb from WCBS Radio.

**Mayor:** Rich Lamb, you out there?

**Moderator:** One moment, please.

**Mayor:** We're experiencing technical difficulties.

**Moderator:** We lost Rich Lamb.

**Mayor:** All right, we'll come back to Rich. Yes.

**Moderator:** Next up is Shant from the Daily News.

**Mayor:** Shant?

**Question:** Yeah. Good morning, everyone. One of the follow-up on the ventilator issue, just because it seems like something that could either put parent's minds at ease or raise some serious concerns. I mean, my colleague over the weekend did an analysis finding about 650 out of 150 – excuse me – 1,500 buildings surveyed by city inspectors last year had at least one deficiency in their exhaust fans. Can you put a number on how many fans – or how many buildings will have their fans fully fixed by the start of the fall semester? And I guess I want to, you know, the corollary to that is if it's not a 100 percent fixed, how can you say that we're different and we're ready? Thanks.

**Mayor:** Thanks, Shant. Appreciate the question and look, let me use the parallel issues were raised about some classrooms or their issues that had to be addressed. Another piece of the equation, and that's been out there recently, that was a few hundred classrooms against a grand total of 58,000. So, I think we have definite issues as always as a huge, huge system, 1,800 schools, there's always things to fix, but from what I have seen with the issues we face, they are, thank God, isolated. If there are specific exhaust fans that need to be fixed, that's going to be a high priority. We have a month before school opens, everyone's focused on health and safety. But I think the point from your question and Reema's question previously is we need to show the public constantly that progress and those numbers, and we will do that. Go ahead.

**Question:** So, I mean, I guess to be clear, should people take it to mean that a 100 percent of schools will have their ventilation systems fixed by the start of the fall semester? If you could clarify that? And yeah, I'd love to hear from Dr. Varma on this issue. What is the role of ventilation and clean air in indoor schooling?

**Mayor:** I'll start and turn to Dr. Varma. So, Shant, here's how it goes. We have to believe, first of all, that the whole school system is ready to go and that's why we set this very rigorous standard of a three percent infection rate. So, we're setting a high bar on top of which we are demanding that every school do social distancing, face coverings, constant handwashing, get the ventilation systems moving, get the windows open. It's just – it's an endless series of steps to protect. Any specific classroom that we do not feel is ready by the open day of school will not be opened up. If there's a bigger problem in a school, we will make that adjustment as well. But because everyone is focused on health and safety and getting ready, and I emphasize a month is a long time, particularly when in some cases you have teams working around the clock, we're going to – I believe – have every school ready. There may be some classrooms or some specific parts within a building that still needs some work, but overall, I think we're going to be ready. But we should be transparent about that. I think it's helpful to be transparent about that.

As I turn to Dr. Varma, I would only say one of the things I've learned from Dr. Varma with great appreciation, is this notion of layering all sorts of approaches to protect our kids, and Dr. Varma is a parent too. We've talked about it from a parental perspective, how you want everything firing on all its cylinders, again, whether it's hand washing, face coverings, distancing, open windows, you want it all, which puts us in effectively, you know, 180 degrees different from where we were when this crisis began when it suddenly burst upon us and we couldn't put any of those methodologies in place. This is an entirely different reality than what we had back in March. Go ahead, Dr. Varma.

**Senior Advisor Jay Varma:** Great. Thank you for the question. I think that as the Mayor has highlighted, we have to first start with the most important question. We should only open the schools if we have this epidemic controlled in the community. And we feel very confident right now, at this moment, based on all of our measures that New York has good control of this epidemic, and we're going to obviously continue to watch that closely from day to day. The second is, okay, if the schools are now going to be open because we have the epidemic control, what are all of the different measures we can put in place that when added up together, make the school as safe as possible? As the Mayor just highlighted, we have lots of interventions, some more effective than others, but they really work best when they're all added up together. The first is anybody who's sick should stay out of school and there's going to be a number of ways that we're going to work with parents and their families to keep track of their kids. As a parent myself, we've been guilty, my wife and I, of sending our kids to school in the past when they may not have been as healthy as they should have been because they needed to go to a certain class. So, we need to change that culture for everybody, myself and everybody else included.

The second is in the classroom. We know that the majority of transmission occurs within a short range, that is people who are in close proximity to each other. So the ways to reduce that transmission are all the efforts that are going on, reducing the number of people in the classroom, maintaining that six feet of distance from each other, and then really very importantly, being

strictly adherent to the wearing of face coverings because that can reduce the number of droplets that transmit over that short range. Now added to that is the value and benefit of ventilation. And I think you've already heard that, you know, we all concur and agree that fresh air is the single most important thing, and if you can't get fresh air because of the temperature or the design of the room, the next best is to improve the centralized heating ventilation system and with or without the use of air purifiers as well. So I think all of these measures have to be added on top of each other and I don't think there should be unnecessary fear about ventilation, you know, not being adequate because I think all of these things have to be in place together and ventilation is one piece, an important piece, but really not the only piece.

**Mayor:** Thank you.

**Moderator:** Next up, we have Derick Waller from WABC?

**Mayor:** And is Rich still out there? You won't forget him?

**Moderator:** We won't forget Rich.

**Mayor:** Alright. Derick?

**Question:** Alright. Good morning. Hi. I have a specific question that was sent to me from a teacher who wanted to remain anonymous, but basically one of the issues he says is that the learning system that's being used on these tablets he says is problematic, and he says, I'll read it verbatim. He says, "the iLearn and Edmonton Systems DOE is making everyone use are complicated. They're not even an app for them. So, the kids who have only a phone or a tablet are forced to do their work using the web browser on the phone or iPad." So, could we talk about that concern that perhaps the technology is complicated to use?

**Mayor:** I'm going to start as the layman and then let the two educators jump in. Look, we have all been trying to make the most of remote learning, but Derek, I'm going to say this as a layman and a parent, I don't know anyone who thinks remote learning is as good as in person learning. And that's, before you even talk about the fact that different kids have access to different levels of technology, no matter how much we're trying to get the best available technology in the hands of every child, there's still a huge digital divide. And it hurts kids who either they don't have the right devices or they have the right devices, but they're not a 100 percent sure how to use them, some parents can help, some can't help. Look, I would just say, no matter how much we have to keep trying to perfect the approach to more remote learning and make it better. What's clear is under these kinds of emergency conditions, we have to also recognize that in person learning is always better. We're not talking about remote learning that we had years and years to perfect as something we would use for a whole school system. This all had to be done under wartime conditions. But I do know that nonetheless my colleagues are working every day to try and improve it. Now that's my framing, now to the specific question of the specific approaches being used and the issues being raised. Go ahead.

**Chancellor Carranza:** Thank you, sir. I'll start and then I'll ask our First Deputy Chancellor to also add. So, we've learned a tremendous amount since we pivoted to remote learning in March

and those lessons we are continuing to put into place. We've also gathered lots of great practices from the field and including our teachers, especially our teachers that have shown us a lot of different ways of organizing what that remote learning looks like. I will say that there are multiple opportunities for teachers to use different platforms. Google Classroom is being used ubiquitously across all of our system as well. So, there are some options, and what I would say to my colleague teacher that asked a question, there are multiple platforms for you to explore, and there is help in the teach hub on our website. So, I would encourage you to look there and there's more work that is being done every day to try to make it as seamless and useful, not only to teachers, but to students as well. Donald?

**First Deputy Chancellor Conyers:** Thank you, and I would add – thank you, Chancellor Carranza – I would add to that, that in addition to all the support provided that we are also working with remote learning champions and our BCOs to ensure that both – [inaudible] – BCO is a borough citywide office which supports schools throughout the city. These BCOs, thank you, Mayor – these BCOs have remote learning champions that we're going to be dispatching so that if a school has an issue such as the one described, we will be able to tap in with the school and provide support, and as the Chancellor indicated, there are various platforms that are being used ubiquitously, presently.

**Mayor:** Thank you.

**Question:** And then I just want to ask one more question about the budget, because I know that obviously you had to make hard choices with the budget this year. The person who said that they cut summer school hours by more than half due to budgeting. Is that true? And then teachers were dismissed because of budgeting as well? Is that – can you talk about if that's accurate and if the budget is going to impact the staffing levels in the upcoming school year?

**Mayor:** Derrick, it's a real important question. Let me start and turn to the Chancellor. Look, no we clearly said from the beginning, no matter how tough the budget situation has been, we've tried to keep our city workforce intact, to deal with all the challenges and help keep the city moving forward, and one of the things I've said about the stimulus all along if New York City and cities all over the country, don't have their workforce, it's not going to allow us to restart. We need our workforce to provide the services that people depend on. That's the foundation of restarting your economy. But no, we have obviously kept our teachers and educators in place. Summer school was very different this year. Obviously, it couldn't be in-person. It was a very, very different approach. But our goal here is to keep all our city employees in place, but we have a very tough deadline coming up on October 1st, and we either need a help from Washington or Albany to avert having to lay off any of our teachers or other employees. Go ahead, Richard.

**Chancellor Carranza:** Mr. Mayor. So, I just want to emphasize what you've said about the austere budget environment that we as a city and a state are facing, and it has an impact on every operation of this city, including the school system. However, it sounds like the question is more towards staffing levels for summer school, and this is not uncommon. There is a projected need for how many teachers you'll need based on how many students will be taking summer school, and then as that becomes a reality, in other words, as summer school starts, sometimes you're right on the money. Sometimes there's not as many students that choose to take summer school

as had indicated. So, then you cut back on how many folks are actually teaching in summer school. It sounds like it's much more of that readjustment based on the actual numbers, but there were no layoffs, no one was dismissed. It's just the reconfiguration that happens when you're doing a summer school program.

**Moderator:** Next up, we're coming back to Rich Lamb from WCBS.

**Question:** Testing, testing, testing. Do you have me?

**Mayor:** There you go, Rich. Twice is a charm.

**Question:** Alright. I think my mic was on, but whatever. So, here's a question – I'm pulling out to 30,000 feet here from the specific questions. So, you know, with all the moving parts of this hybrid school year, you know, the blended learning in-person, remote, one-way hallways, all the health items that you've talked about, is it reasonable to expect the first day or the first week will be a kind of a scene of confusion in the schools?

**Mayor:** That's very important question, Rich. Look, I think it's important to get our expectations, right, and when we've had our ongoing conversations with the unions representing educators and the unions representing staff, everyone is concerned that they want to provide the very best experience for kids, but they know we're doing it under very adverse circumstances. So, I want a level set here. Will it be the same as the opening day of school has been in recent years? No, of course not. I want to give everyone credit the Chancellor, the First Deputy Chancellor, everyone in our school system in recent years, opening day of school went very, very smoothly, but now Rich, we're going to be doing something for the first time on a vast scale. So, the first days, the first weeks are going to take getting used to, are going to take adjustments. Look, a lot of work is being done to get it right, to communicate with parents and kids, to make it as smooth as possible, and obviously there'll be a lot fewer kids in each building and that in some ways will make it simpler, but everyone will be dealing with a new system. So, I think it's going to take a certain number of weeks to really get it to move smoothly. Chancellor?

**Chancellor Carranza:** Mr. Mayor, thank you. So Rich, I'd like to appeal directly to our families. It is going to be more critical than ever that we work very closely together to prepare students for what the first day, the first week, first couple of weeks are going to look like in school, and what you can do specifically is to start talking now to your children, especially your younger children, about why it's important to wear a mask. Why it's, it's not only a service to themselves, but to others to wear a mask. It's an act of friendship. It's an act of love. For our older students, to start inculcating in them. The fact that this is not going to look the same as it was before. Lunch is not going to look the same. They're going to be one way, hallways, where you'll walk in one way you must social distance as you're entering and coming to school and why that's important. All of those things that parents can do at home to start preparing students for what this very different school year will look like will be an incredibly powerful message and partnership as we really launch into this very different new school year in the fall.

**Mayor:** Did you have a follow?

**Question:** It's not really a follow, but just an additional question. Is there any – what kind of plans are there for outdoor use, you know, tents and that sort of thing. I mean, you hear about it in maybe milder climates but is there also any plan to use trailers? I mean, obviously you've got a space problem here?

**Mayor:** Yeah. I'll start and turn to my colleagues, Rich. We want to make maximum use of the outdoors in any way we can. So, every school has been encouraged to make their own choices. The school leadership knows their school best to determine how and when they can do it. Trailers might help in some situations. I think there's a lot of cases where that's not a solution just because of availability of space or availability of trailers. Again, we're looking for every space nearby that might work, like those former Catholic school buildings. But the bottom line is we're going to get our hands on everything we can get our hands on in the next month, and then we have time even after that to keep adding capacity, but in good weather, outdoors is definitely something that can add different options for schools.

**Chancellor Carranza:** Thank you, Mr. Mayor. Maybe the First Deputy Chancellor would also like to add something to this, but the conversation around outdoor spaces is something that we've been asked a lot about and absolutely we've given schools the opportunity to explore what that might look like in their own school environment, their neighborhood, adjacent buildings. That's part of the planning in terms of what we're looking at in terms of, I call it swing space, but additional space for schools that need more space. But as a teacher, if I put my teacher hat on and now I've set up my classroom and let's say, it's outside, it's under a tent, I've got all of my materials. I've got everything set up to go outside as a teacher, and it works great for three, four days, and then I have Hurricane [inaudible], he sees a deal that comes in and the imagine you have to break that down, and then the question becomes then where do you put that? Because all of the indoor space has already been allocated for classroom spaces. So, when the Mayor and I talk about it, it's absolutely an option. It's not an ideal option. We're talking about it from that very practical lens of if you – if it's not a good option on any particular day, then where do those students, where do those teachers, what are those materials? Where does that, where does that go? And if you already allocate everything else, it becomes problematic in that way.

**Mayor:** Donald?

**First Deputy Chancellor Conyers:** I would just add that while I agree wholeheartedly with the Chancellor and the Mayor, there are opportunities for physical education for those classes already programmed. So, making use of the outdoor, but to go beyond the schedule, we then transgressed the 33 – or go beyond the 33 percent model, for example, causing a problem.

**Moderator:** And for our last question today, we go to Bobby from NY1.

**Question:** Hi guys, I wanted to ask a question about preschool. Obviously, things are different for the older kids than they are for the younger kids. Preschoolers have never been to school before, in some cases, and they have issues with transitioning. How are we going to treat that? Will parents be allowed into the classroom at all? Even in the first days of school?

**Mayor:** Yeah, it's a great question. So, I think, you know, nothing is more priceless to me than our youngest kids and what we've done with a Pre-K, 3-K – this is a challenge for sure to make sense of it in this situation. Now I'll let the educators speak to it. I can say two things definitively. One, we have to be very careful about parents coming into school buildings. That's not going to be something we allow under the vast majority of situations, just because of the health issues we're dealing with. So, what we would have done normal times, we're not going to do now a second. I can tell you many scenes from the childhoods of my children, where I thought in their youngest years, they were going to have a horrible separation experience and I was ready to stick with them and help them through, and what quickly became apparent is they couldn't wait to see their friends, and they said a very quick goodbye to me and ran into the classroom. So, I think what we learn as parents is our youngest kids are incredibly adaptable. They yearn for that social experience. They love to be with their teachers and their friends. I think we'll find that folks are going to find a way to make it work. The first days as always will be a little bit challenging, but then we'll find a way to make it work. So that's the layman's view. Educators, what do you say?

**Chancellor Carranza:** I would take the layman's view. That's exactly what it's going to look like. We see that already with some of our youngest learners in our rec centers where they've been very adaptable and they've done a good job. Donald?

**First Deputy Chancellor Conyers:** Yeah. Nothing to add, sir.

**Mayor:** Go ahead.

**Question:** Okay. I also wanted to ask about testing. Obviously, testing is important now that we're trying to remain below that threshold, the five percent threshold. I wonder, you know, what are we doing in terms of encouraging people to get tested? Maybe this is a question for Dr. Varma. At this point, should people go get tested if they don't have symptoms, should people get tested more than once? Should they be going as often as possible? Because that's going to affect the percentage of positive tests that we get back?

**Mayor:** I'll start and turn to Dr. Varma. It's a great question. The answer is we definitely want to keep encouraging people to get tested, especially those who haven't been. We have a lot of testing capacity – it's continued to grow, and the striking thing has been, as we've added more and more testing capacity and more and more New Yorkers getting tested, the numbers stay so consistent, and that says so much to us. So, the basic answer is yes, people should keep getting tested, but go ahead, Dr. Varma to the specific questions.

**Senior Advisor Varma:** Yeah. Thank you for the question. We continue to believe very strongly that we need to expand testing throughout the city, and that means not just increasing our capacity, but actually actively encouraging people to seek out testing. The reason that is so important is that we know this infection can be spread by people who don't currently have symptoms or don't feel like they have symptoms, and one of the only ways that we can get ahead of this virus is making sure we identify those people as quickly as possible separating them safely, identifying their contacts and separating them as well, and so the only way we can do that is by having New Yorkers continuously and regularly seeking out as much testing as possible.

Now, the question about percentages, one of the advantages to actually having widespread testing for, with, or without symptoms is that it helps ensure that the numbers that we report on confirmed cases are a much better reflection of actually what's going on. One of the reasons we haven't sort of publicly every single day talk about our number of cases is because we always worry about whether they're a real accurate measure of how much is going on with the community, but the greater percentage of the population you're testing, the more reliable that data becomes. So, we really do encourage New Yorkers to continue to get tested, whether they have symptoms or not, and it's going to be particularly important as more and more offices, schools, and other parts of New York return back to normal.

**Mayor:** Hey, Jay, would you just add one more piece to the question because it can be very helpful for New Yorkers to hear this. If someone got tested, when do you think they should get tested again? What's it just a good rule of thumb for someone asking themselves, Hey, it's been a while. Should I go back again?

**Senior Advisor Varma:** Yeah. You know, there is no formal guidance as yet, but it's something we're working on, but the rule of thumb that I follow myself and I encourage others to do is to make sure you're tested at least once every month. That's kind of a good rule of thumb. You know what I mean? In an ideal world, we would have, you know, readily available tests that people could even just give them in their homes, but we're not in that world right now. So about once a month is practical and then to consider getting tested immediately if you are exposed to anyone, if you have recently traveled back from a place that has a high rate of community transmission and then it's also something to consider if you may be visiting a relative or a friend who has a vulnerable condition.

**Mayor:** Excellent. Thank you, well, look, everyone, as we conclude today just a simple statement about our public schools. First of all, I want to say a profound thank you to all our educators because they are working so hard, and I want to emphasize a lot of them have given up a lot of their summer to get ready for serving our kids again this fall. I thank all the educators in New York City for the hard work you're doing. I know you love our kids. You want to be there for them, and thank you to the parents and to the kids who have persevered through everything. I also want to thank you. What we have here is a great New York City story of strength and resilience, and it's also a reminder of what our public schools mean to begin with. Once upon a time, there were no public schools, and then the idea began to take root, and the idea was an egalitarian one, it was about everyone having opportunity. It was about every child, regardless of income, getting an education, every child being able to fulfill their potential. The more the idea of public education grew, the more it became the foundation of democracy and this city, I'm proud that we've been able to take it even farther, creating a whole new grade with Pre-K for All, and now going even farther with 3-K, all for free, helping more and more kids to actually get that strong foundation. We're not going to stop no matter what's thrown at us, but we are going make sure it's safe. That will be the number one consideration. I'll finish simply by saying, when I think of public schools, I think of our values as New Yorkers. I think about the idea that everyone deserves an opportunity and no one gets left behind. That's what our public schools do for our kids every day, socially, emotionally, educationally, in terms of the food they provide, the healthcare they provide, the mental health and physical health. You name it. The schools are where so many of our kids get the support they need, and you heard the beautiful story from

Donald about him coming up and the teachers who influenced him every New York City public school student has a story like that, of a teacher who was there for them and changed their life, and that's why it's so important that we be ready in September for another strong school year in New York City to serve the kids we love. Thank you, everybody.

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