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**RUSH TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO ANNOUNCES 64 NEW PROSE SCHOOLS DRIVING
INNOVATION ACROSS SYSTEM**

Mayor Bill de Blasio: We feel self-conscious talking in the library, but we'll do it anyway.

It is a great joy to be at the Michael J. Petrides School, here in Staten Island, and to announce that this will be one of 64 new PROSE schools that we are announcing today. That will be doubling the total number of PROSE schools in our school system.

This is one of the most exciting developments in education in New York City. The PROSE concept is rewriting our approach to education from the ground up. We engage the people who do the work — the educators and their principal — to figure out what will work for that school and that school community — to innovate, to reform, to come up with that which will be most effective in serving the children of the school. And we said this back in the time when we announced the contract with our teachers last year, but I'll say it again and again — this means not only the ability of a school community to suspend their DOE work rules, it also gives them the ability to suspend their union work rules to create an entirely new approach, and a more flexible approach to get the job done the way they see fit.

There's tremendous energy among teachers to take full advantage of this opportunity to rewrite the rules in the way they think will help them best to serve the children, who they're here — who their lives are devoted to. They're here because of these children. They want to serve them. They want to better their lives. And teachers all over the city welcome the opportunity to do it their way, to work within the school community and figure out what makes sense for them. And it's exciting. This is reform on a grand scale. Remember when we said, at the time the contract was announced, that our vision was to have up to 200 PROSE schools over the coming years. Originally we thought that could be as much as a five-year build out. Right now, at the rate we're going, there will be 200 PROSE schools by the end next school year.

There's been extraordinary embrace of this idea. And I remind you — and I say this is reform on a grand scale — I want to put this in the context of our nation, and I will have our excellent communications teams — team get you the exact facts. But there are not many school systems in America that have more than 200 schools. This is a huge endeavor. This is going to be a national model for reform, and one that I think is going to bear fruit very quickly — that is unleashing the energies of our teachers.

Now, I want to thank all who are here with me today. I'm going to acknowledge a couple of folks — and you'll hear from the others in just a few moments — but I want to thank, of course, the principal of this great school, Joann Buckheit — thank her for all she does.

[Applause]

And I want to thank the Executive Vice President for Council of School Supervisors and Administrators, Mark Cannizzaro. Thank you, Mark.

[Applause]

Now, I think I have made clear over the years I am a public school parent. I have — let's see — three more weeks, four more weeks of having that distinction. And I see the work we do on education through the eyes of my fellow parents. We know we have some of the very best schools in the entire nation. A recent report made very clear — not just some of the best schools in the state, some of the best schools in the nation here amongst our New York City public schools.

We also know we have too many schools that are not succeeding — that are not reaching every child. We're not doing well enough in every neighborhood. And there's a lot that we said that we would do to change that, and it has to be aggressive, and it has to be fast, and it has to be energetic.

So, we laid down all sorts of building blocks to start to make this intensive change — the community schools effort, the afterschool and extended learning time efforts, renewal schools, pre-k, more teacher training hours, more hours for teachers to engage with parents. These are all items of a reform agenda that put in place — that we put in place just in the last 16 months. And we're implementing them all simultaneously and intensively.

But we know we have to even more — and part of it is re-imagining our schools can best serve our children. Those who are best suited to do that are our educators. And that's what brought us to the PROSE concept. Let the people who know how to educate do what they know best. Let them apply the tools and all the learning they have. Free them of those work rules so they can innovate.

What does it mean? It depends on each school, of course, but some of the things that are options and that are being implemented at PROSE schools already — longer school hours, weekend sessions with students or for additional teacher training and preparation, more one-on-one time between teachers and students — all resulted over the last year since the new contract went into place.

62 PROSE schools announced last year — 64 more we're announcing now. And you see — we achieve longer school days through staggering teachers' schedules so we can serve more kids with more hours. We've rearranged, in some schools, the calendar for more professional development time — both full- and half-day professional development. And we know professional development is what makes for better teachers. We have a lot of great teachers. We have a lot of teachers who can be even greater if they get that training, like in any other profession. It's also part of how we retain great teachers is that they constantly get to improve their professional capacity.

And that is consistent with our approach also to deepen the role of parents in the educational process, which is why we're putting more and more time into engaging parents and having teachers and parents figure out collaboratively how to reach our children.

Petrides is a school that has a long history of innovation — named after the beloved Staten Islanders and dynamic educator, the late Michael Petrides. He was someone who believed in creativity in education. He created college-style classes to ensure the students would be college-ready. And I was thrilled in the class we just visited now to see some of that same spirit in a new form — those young people in the combined chemistry and physics class thinking the way college students would think, collaborating on a level that you would only imagine would happen in a college classroom.

So much of Petrides' vision is being updated and applied today under our circumstances — the flexible class sizes and the special office hours to help students who need a little more help.

You're going to hear from one of the Rodriguez brothers in a moment. They are doing something extraordinary. They have been teaching for 16 years — Carlos Rodriguez and his brother, Antonio. Carlos is a physics teacher, Antonio — a chemistry teacher. And they realized if you brought the two ideas together in different levels of students, they could all help each other learn. And the students we visited with were so clear about the fact that the conversation between them on the subject matter was helping the younger and the older students to learn. It was getting everyone involved — not just the kids who might participate the most historically. It was helping

them to figure out how to apply the concepts in everyday life. It was preparing them – they were very explicit about this – they knew it was preparing them for college, because they were thinking in a manner that was like that which they would confront up ahead.

And Carlos said something powerful about what the PROSE school approach and the reform approach will mean here. He says it's like a second wind for the school. The energy it will create is priceless.

Now, I will say, that energy, that ability to innovate and to move quickly – because the changes we need in our schools have to happen right now – they can't wait – whether you're talking about pre-k, or afterschool, or teacher training, or parent involvement, or renewal schools, or community schools, or PROSE schools – they have to happen now. They can happen now because of mayoral control of education, because the buck stops here and we have the ability to move things with speed and precision. And it's important that our friends in Albany understand that. I'll be going to Albany in a few days to talk to them about mayoral control and other issues. It's important for those who care deeply – and I know they do – about the future of education to understand mayoral control allows for speedy improvement and reform.

So we're going to keep building on this momentum. Not only do we have to get it right right now for the kids in school now – we have to create momentum for deeper reforms that will then serve generations of New York schoolchildren going forward.

And our goal is very clear – we will not stop until we reach every child – and we believe we can.

Just quickly in Spanish –

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

With that, whether she speaks English or Spanish, she is equally articulate about the changes we are making in our schools, and she's doing an extraordinary job as the leader of our school system – our chancellor, Carmen Fariña –

[...]

Mayor: So we've got a real partner in this effort, and I know that Michael Mulgrew believes deeply in this concept of innovation and reform; and unleashing the [inaudible] of our teachers. As Carmen Fariña said, the intellectual capacity and the intellectual grounding that goes into the work of education being opened up so teachers can create. And I want to thank Michael for his partnership as the PROSE effort continues to grow.

[...]

Mayor: And Michael, it's only been a year since [inaudible].

UFT President Michael Mulgrew: That is correct, May 4th.

Mayor: A year – this has been done in the context of just one year. We have been doing a lot of work on many different fronts in terms of the need to Staten Island. And one thing I can say about the borough president – as soon as we finished one mission and have one accomplishment he calls immediately with the next topic. Literally that happened – let's see we were together on Thursday and on Friday. You were raising a host of additional concerns proving your commitment to public service. I want to thank him for all the partnership and the constant collaboration we do.

[...]

Mayor: The renowned Rodriguez brothers were referenced earlier. Representing the two of them is one of them – Carlos Rodriguez who is the physics teacher of the two. And Carlos we saw the extraordinary energy in your

classroom. And I have to tell you it's just so inspiring to see the level of participation, the energy to learn, the energy to help each other learn. That's a credit to what you have created for your students, and we thank you.

[...]

Mayor: Okay, we are going to do – you've seen it before – on-topic followed by off-topic. Yes?

Question: If the PROSE concept is so great for the kids, why cap it at 200? And moreover why subject it to negotiations? Why not implement it wholesale?

Mayor: I think we are going to, as I said, hit 200 by next year, and then keep going. We've already talked about continuing to build this out. You know, 200, again, is a huge endeavor and we will constantly be monitoring to make sure that it is working up to our expectations. But we're very, very encouraged so far. So I think the sky is the limit here.

Question: Why should it be subject to negotiation if everyone –

Mayor: Well again, the initial – I think when you talk about something that a transcendent approach, it really was. We used to have both – in all schools of course – both the DOE work rules and the union work rules were given. To say that we're now going to take, you know, over a tenth of our school system and that create local innovation reform in the course of just a few years, that's a pretty big commitment right away. But I think it's just going to keep building out. I think it was right to do it initially through negotiations because it was necessary for contractual reasons, and legal reasons. But I think what we're finding now is there's such great enthusiasm that I think it will be very natural. I think – I will not speak for Michael, and Michael will speak for himself, but I think – I think it will be a very natural thing to keep building further. Hit it.

Michael Mulgrew: To your question, the minute you start mandating it, putting it top down it's not going to work. So, it's a very process itself. And I give the mayor a lot of credit because not a lot of people would have come in as mayor and said I believe in the people in the school, and we're going to create this process. And I believe that they're going to innovate to a way that's going to take our school system to a much better place. And it is that process. Just imagine this, the people in this school not only voted 85 percent for massive changes in their workday, they also voted to work harder than they ever did before because that's what's going to be required for them to implement this plan. And that's what happens because they were respected as professionals, and were part of the process. You come in from above saying, I have a better idea, and therefore you're going to do this – that's not going to work because you never engaged them in the right way. This is education at its finest. You cannot teach your students unless you engage them. You're not going to make substantial changes unless you engage in the power of the people chosen to be in that classroom every day, and that's the educators.

Mayor: Quick follow-up on that, again, this – I think it's part of human life. I think everyone in every profession feels it. If you are respected to apply the tools of your trade, and to innovate, and create it's a much more engaging workplace; people are able to get more done. They inevitably get more committed. I think we had a problem in this city previously where, you know, there was a questioning of our educators, and a suggestion implicitly that they were not interested in doing the work. I've known thousands of educators over the years, and what I have found is the overwhelming majority are deeply committed to the work. So, I think this is to borrow from Marcia [inaudible] here, the medium is the message. By saying we're opening up the process to reform we are not only achieving the specific reforms in individual schools and innovations. We're also sending a larger message to our educators that we believe in them. And I believe that will make them more productive. I think anyone who is legitimately told that they have a lot to offer, and that they're making an impact is going to achieve more than someone who is put down.

Question: [inaudible]

Question: [inaudible] success of the program? Are you looking at grades? How are you measuring the success of the program?

Mayor: I'll let the chancellor speak to it, but I'll say on everything — multiple measures. And we are believers in multiple measures, so we're never, you know, just looking at one test, for example. We also know that this is something that's very promising, again, as a model on a much bigger scale in this school system. So, we're not going to pass final judgment on it after just one or two years. We're going to give it time to build and grow, because it's so tremendously promising. But I'll let the chancellor speak to the [inaudible]

Chancellor Carmen Fariña, Department of Education: Well, honestly, student achievement is always going to be something we look at. And the scores will be coming out over the summer, so we'll look at that. But we're going to be looking at teacher satisfaction and teacher retention. We're also going to be looking at — part of the PROSE, as well as the other learning [inaudible] — how many visitors schools have. One of the things [inaudible] PROSE schools is to be open to visitors, so we can highlight the work here. So, after this school starts in September, how many schools come and visit, and then take on the same work. So, there's going to be multiple measures of looking at it. But for me, once teachers — you know, nationally it's a concern — teachers are not staying in teaching. I'd like to reverse the trend, and say that in New York City teachers are going to stay in teaching because we respect them. We really encourage them to be creative thinkers. And we're also saying if you get — if you apply to the school that is going to fill your needs, that this is something that is good for society as a whole. So, I think there's going to be multiple measures.

Question: [inaudible]

Chancellor Fariña: Oh, absolutely. Everything we do has a parent component. And that's going to be out in the snapshot — the school reports that we put out. These parent surveys in the school already — parents came to an extremely well attended parent meeting about the PROSE, and they were very enthusiastic. So, it's also about, how do we dialogue deeper with each other? For too long in education, we told people what to do, and then we reported what we did. This is about talk, and talk, and talk. And this also goes to the whole relationship, I think, between the DOE and the CFA and the USC. It's about talking to each other — dialoguing. What do you think? What do we think? How do we make things better? And always keeping in mind — what's the end result as far as kids — student achievement.

Mayor: So, just a quick note from our crack research team. So I mentioned what 200 schools meant in broader perspective. So, Buffalo, New York, for example, has fewer than 100 schools. Boston has approximately 130 schools. And we'll get the exact numbers, but 200 schools constitutes, again, something that's equivalent to the school system of one of our largest cities. Rich?

Question: Can you zoom in on how — how this has changed something specific, just to give us — the uninitiated — some idea of what this does? You know —

Mayor: Sure, let me start and then pass to Carmen. I mean, for example, by staggering teacher schedules, you can do a longer school day. With this right there, you're already changing the playing field. We have been working at longer school days in several different ways — the afterschool effort for middle school kids is one example. And I remind you, that is going to, in the coming school year, be something that is [inaudible] available to our middle school children. Any middle school child who wants afterschool has the ability to stay three more hours in an educational setting, and getting the advantages of that [inaudible]. Another one of the models that comes out the PROSE effort is teachers agreeing to change their schedules so we can stretch out the school day. The weekend activities — in some cases it will be efforts to support students. In these other cases, teacher training and planning. Again, everything being more conducive to teacher training efforts, which we know both improve the quality of teachers and improve the retention of teachers [inaudible]. Carmen can add to that.

Chancellor Fariña: Well, first and foremost, I would say that the PROSE has one major consistent across all schools — that people had to start talking to each other as early as last September, when schools came back. In

the past, faculty conferences generally were a principal giving out [inaudible] sheets, talking to staff, and staff — if they were lucky — sometimes turning and talking to each other. This change is a whole paradigm of what meetings look like. Meetings are teacher-led, they are teacher-produced. And, in many cases, teachers meet without any administrative presence. This, to me, is all innovative. It happens in some schools across the city over time, but it hasn't happened consistently. And we're saying this is a good thing. It also means that it's better for principals saying, I have a good idea. And in this particular case, I believe [inaudible] went to the principal to say, we have a good idea, and we would like your support. And that changes the whole culture of teaching, because the people who are in the classroom should have some say. I would say also that one of the things you're looking at is PROSE where the school days are allotted so that teachers can work longer one day, but perhaps not work at all on another day. So a four-day longer school week, and one day not so long. And for me, I'm thinking working parents, people who have young children — who might want more of a flexible schedule, the way you have in the business world — saying, well, that's the kind of school that I might want to work in. So we're looking at everything, but I want to say that it's not all about time — it's what happening with that time. We also have schools where, for example, the teachers have what they call core classes — large groups with maybe four adults in it, and then pulling out small groups of kids by their need. This school is one of the innovators in ICT classes — special needs kids incorporated. A class we saw today had a number of those students, and I think it's really to the credit of the principal and the teachers that they see this as a whole other way to reach all kids. So, there's a lot of things that are happening differently, and maybe we can put out a sheet that tells you exactly what each of the PROSE schools is doing that's different than all the others.

Mayor: And just to add quickly on the retention point — you know, we're going to be talking more and more about this [inaudible]. We've had a huge challenge. You've heard what Carmen referenced before — historically, there's a problem with teacher retentions. So, we get good, talented people coming into the teaching retention, and then leave just when they're starting to hit their prime. That problem quickly is growing in many parts of the country, and we're very concerned about it here. Part of what this does is it makes the teaching profession much more engaging. It makes the workplace more engaging. It helps us to attract and keep the best talent. And I've often said that the educational debate is backwards, because there's a focus on the small number of teachers who don't belong in the profession, and we're very aggressively addressing that. We need to focus on the many who do belong in the profession, but too many of whom we're losing. So, to really get down to what's going to serve our kids, we've got to stop losing the best talent. And we think the PROSE effort is going to be one of the tools to address that.

Question: [inaudible]

Chancellor Fariña: I would say that the majority of the schools are really featured that have an innovative staff who [inaudible]. The criteria — we do expect them to meet certain guidelines, but not all schools are meeting the same guidelines. I think the most important thing for us is that they have good teacher retention, so that the teachers who vote on getting this done are the — actually the teachers who are going to be there to implement the plan. They are not receiving any extra money, per se, but they could have money savings based on the plan that they put together. So, if — if teachers have voted, for example, to do something interesting with their prep period, they are not getting paid for that, but they're using that time in an alternative way by their choice. So, there's a lot of things that are really different in this, but not necessarily money — extra money, but money used differently.

[Chancellor Fariña speaks in Spanish]

Question: [inaudible] I'm wondering to what extent can you collaborate with charters? [inaudible] and if you feel like charters have been lacking and that [inaudible] and while on the subject —

Mayor: Woah — that's a fourteen-point run-on question. [inaudible] we'll come back to you for another part in a moment. And I'll start and pass it to Carmen. Okay. The charter movement is very diverse. I really — I believed this for a long time. I believe this deeply. We work with charter schools. That's what we do. We want to serve the kids who are in charter schools, but we also know the charter movement is exceedingly diverse. There are some charter schools that are exemplary at sharing the best practices and innovations with surrounding district

schools. There are some that are not. There are some that are very representative of their surrounding school population. In fact, some go out of their way to recruit more English language learner and special-ed kids than the general population of that part of the city. There are others that don't. So I think it's a mixed bag to begin with, like most of human life. There are certainly some that we've had a very good experience with in terms of sharing best practices, and we'll continue to deepen that with, you know, any and all charters that want to do that. And I know the chancellor's spent a lot of time meeting with charter school leaders and representatives of the charter movement to talk about how to deepen that collaboration. On the question of what we're doing here – I am very much a believer in what the public sector can achieve. And our schools, as I've said, have historically turned out, you know, generations of extraordinary people. All those great New York City success stories that we know so well – the vast majority of those folks came out of our public schools. The recent list of the best school of the country – well represented were New York City public schools. So from my point of view, we have to take what's right about New York City public schools, and build upon it, and really make sure it reaches every neighborhood consistently. This is one of ways we do it. Innovation and reform should be the providence of the public sector, and it should be synonymous with traditional public schools. And in fact, there's a fair critique that over the years – not just here, but elsewhere – some of our traditional public schools didn't innovate as much as they should have. We don't want to live that way, which is why in this contract – there was very much a consensus on this – we want our schools to be the best in the country, and we're going to keep innovating until we get there. But to me, if you say, okay, some charters are doing a great job innovating, others less so; some are sharing their practices, others less so. Of course we should do more of it ourselves. It just makes sense. If we have the ability to do it, why shouldn't we do it? And then on top of that, it's going to make the workplace better for our teachers. It's going to help us retain great teachers. It's going to help us reach our kids much better, and figure out what works, and constantly innovate, and reach kids with longer hours – all the kinds of things we talked about we need. So that's why we're so committed. What was your next –

Question: I was going to ask – a lot of people – a lot of charter leaders [inaudible] by extending the charter cap [inaudible]

Mayor: [inaudible] I think we – right now, I know for a fact that the current rate of growth of our charters in our city schools – we'll take it from approximately six percent of our overall population to approximately 10 percent over the coming years – that's a natural growth. And then there's additional cap space for other charters to be built out. So I think there is room for the charter movement to grow in the city right now, and I do not think we need to increase the cap. But more to the point, under any scenario, the vast majority of our kids are going to be served by traditional public schools. I've said consistently, we've got to have a breakthrough there. And the PROSE schools – you know, again, reaching a level of 200 schools just for starters – means this public school system will be at the forefront of innovation reform in the nation.

Question: [Inaudible]

Mayor: Let's go back to the beginning. Why do we have unions? And I don't mean to be flip here. I'm saying we just – we should think about this as a question of public policy because unions protect the interest of working people. They ensure that they have a decent standard of living, they have benefits, and they often are able to raise real concerns that have to be addressed for the work to be done right. So, the reason for unions makes all the sense in the world to me – within the collective bargaining context. I think we can say obviously, over the years, some work rules were smart and some were ill-considered or over time, proved to be ill-considered. What we're doing here is reopening that situation in a very productive way. And [inaudible] the school community decide. This is not just happening here in New York City, it's starting to happen around the country, where this generation of educators is saying, we want the freedom to do things our way. We're unionized. We believe in being unionized, but we want the freedom to do things in an innovative manner. So I think this actually lets us get the best of both worlds. [inaudible] Chancellor [inaudible]

Chancellor Farina: I want to be clear that you can't universally change all the rules simultaneously because you need to have quality control. And I think PROSE gives us quality control. But I want to be clear, I would never have stayed a teacher – 22 years in the classroom is a long time for any administrator. And I stayed because I think about my 21st year and my principal said, what can I do to you specifically to keep you here

longer? And she created something that, in those days, was really – we kept it under the radar. I worked four days a week. I was allowed to hire my own staff. And on Fridays, I actually went throughout all [inaudible] and across the city making connections. And that's how I got to be known citywide. And the reality is, if there had been PROSE at the time, we would have applied for it. There wasn't. So meanwhile, they all had to be kept hidden. It was kept private. It was done in a way but I stayed in the classroom an additional two years. And that's where I really see this going. And Michael certainly I know believes it. I'll let him speak for himself. We need teachers who want to do something differently and have a mechanism to do it, while still saying not everybody is ready for this yet. And as we do more of this and people come and visit these schools, they'll say, oh, I see where you're going now. But it is more work. It's harder work, but ultimately it's about making sure that each school does what's right for that school. This can be about all 30 schools doing this simultaneously.

Michael Mulgrew: I thank you for your interesting question. I want to be clear here. There are great schools all over New York City who are not PROSE schools. But, you've got to get this – there's a little misconception here. PROSE is a union rule. We're not – it's a process inside of our contract that says, if you – on your worksite – want to do things differently and you have an agreement with management and the majority – a large portion of the folks are part of that and agree with you that you want to try that in a new way – you have the right to go and do that. That's what PROSE is. It is part of the contract between the UFT and New York City. So it's just taking it to a step further where I – as a teacher – we did a lot of creative things in my school. I don't know if they followed the contract. But we did them because this is something we agree upon. So it's really about – this is saying, if you want, at your worksite, to change the labor management relationship because you think it will allow you to serve the children in your care in a better way, and it's well thought out, and everybody understands it so it has a chance to succeed, your union in its agreement with the city supports you to do that work – and that's what PROSE is, okay?

Unknown: [inaudible]

Mayor: Jimmy Oddo, quoting Winston Churchill – Change is good, or whatever the quote was. Change is good – yes, of course. Of course we want constant –

Unknown: [inaudible]

Mayor: There is nothing wrong with change if it is in the right direction.

[Laughter]

Mayor: Alright. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Oddo. Yeah, we need change by definition. We are not where we want to be, and so part of what we're doing is we are attacking on – I'll continue the Churchill analogy – we are attacking on many fronts, and it's a very assertive strategy. I said when I was running for office, I'll say it right here in front of you – the status quo in New York City education is unacceptable. So we are going to transform the entire school system. We introduced early-childhood education, which was sorely lacking; more after school and other extended hour efforts; more teacher training; more parental engagement; renewal schools – community schools, which are both very, very different structural approaches to education in those schools. But you need all of these approaches more and more and more, and we have to crack the code on teacher retention because that's going to underline all of our ability to transform. So the PROSE schools hit all those other strategies, and I think they'll be particularly helpful in terms of teacher retention. And yes, that freedom – who doesn't want that freedom in their workplace to innovate, to create, to reform. It is natural for professionals to want that ability to create. And so we're going to do that on a bigger and bigger scale. So, phase one – 200 schools, as I said. In national context – a huge and fast jump. There'll be more where that came from.

Question: [inaudible]

Mayor: I think this model is a great model for building out rapidly, and it is done on a cooperative basis. You know, it's very interesting, they're – not just here in New York City – around the country there have been

plenty of instances where elected leaders fought with their educators and fought with their unions. And I've said many, many times, go back and look – see if that yielded an improvement or not. In my opinion, a lot of those fights were counter-productive. They didn't allow us to move forward. We need unity with the workforce to make the changes we have to make. And I think this is an effort that says – and again, look around the country because you see this happening in more and more places. The grassroots are asking for an opportunity to create [inaudible]. We're answering that call. We'll be able to build that out more and more rapidly. I agree with the chancellor 100 percent. We have to do it in stages to check to make sure it's working the way we hope and to make adjustments. But I think this is the shape of things to come.

Question: [inaudible]

Chancellor Fariña: I think the application process for many schools might have been [inaudible]. I think also Staten Island has learning partner schools. We also have showcase schools. We have many other ways on Staten Island of cooperating and being visible, and one of the things I think particularly [inaudible] Staten Island is for many years it was more of an insular place, and now we have principals who are going to the other boroughs, and people are coming to Staten Island to learn. Your learning partner schools [inaudible] IS 75 is one of the schools we send a lot of people to. MS 34 – there are other schools now coming in. So I think this is definitely a school choice and it was an option that we gave them, but there are many other options on Staten Island as well to be innovative and to host visitors as needed.

Question: [inaudible]

Chancellor Fariña: I don't know the exact number of [inaudible]. We'll get back to you with the exact numbers.

Mayor: Okay. Last call on-topic. We're taking questions from journalists. Are those journalists in the back? Student-journalists there? Go ahead.

Question: [inaudible]

Mayor: Pre-k through 12, yes.

Question: [inaudible]

Mayor: I think it'll improve the whole school, right? I think it's something that will, you know, allow, again, for that kind of creativity and energy up and down the line. And I think that school community – and one of the things I feel deeply as a public school parent myself is the community that is a school. And the community is improving. There's a pride. There's an energy that lifts all boats. Yes?

Question: [inaudible]

Chancellor Fariña: Well, first of all, more visitors, a little but more paperwork – what we want to see is how many of the statistics that we – the data that we expect them to put in – that they will come higher on than perhaps similar schools. But also, again, teacher retention [inaudible] and the willingness to see what they've done to others. One of the things that we're hearing across the city – teachers [inaudible] well why aren't you trying this to each other. Now also because of larger superintendencies, many of the superintendents are asking [inaudible] to share with their colleagues. So my feeling is also, although people may not have formally applied for many things, they're trying some of the strategies that other schools are doing. I know here in Staten Island, many of the schools have visited each other already – and I'm trying pieces of this that don't require major changes. And even small changes are good if they're going in the right direction. I'm going to be using that a lot too.

Mayor: Off-topic –

Question: [inaudible]

Mayor: That's sensationalist and that's just fear-mongering. Let's be clear – a couple of facts we have to go through here. First of all, NYPD is doing a fantastic job and driving down crime overall. Look, the major index crimes in New York City – we are down compared to last year to-date. We're down from the year before that. So that is an extraordinary record of achievement right there. We have some areas we have to do better in, and we've been very open about that fact. The fact is, in some boroughs we have seen some increases – in others we've seen decreases. We have to do better in certain precincts and we have to do better at addressing the gang problem. It's abundantly clear, what's happening more and more is isolated to a relatively small set of gangs and crews. And more and more police resources are going to address that problem. And you'll see a series of strategic changes coming up to go at that problem very directly. But no, if you put this year in the context of the years over the last 10-20 years, we still have one of the lowest – overall – again, overall index crime – the lowest crime we've seen in years. When you look at murders and shootings – two areas where we want to do better, and we believe we will do better in the short-term – compared to recent years, still, thank God, very strong. And I think anyone who says that is denigrating the efforts of the NYPD and really needs to look at the facts.

Question: [inaudible]

Mayor: Absolutely. First of all, the work of Vision Zero never ends. So we are constantly looking at intersections that we need to do better at. We've put in measures at a number of intersections. We generally find that those have a big impact – you know, the traffic we designed – the traffic we designed, the other traffic-calming measures, obviously more enforcement, speed limit reduction, speed cameras. But that does not guarantee that every intersection automatically gets better. So in some cases, unfortunately you're going to have some variation where even in some place where you've taken the right measures, you still have some accidents and some tragedies. In other cases it says there's more measures we have to take. So this is work that never ends. But the overall numbers are very important. So I know the news looked at some specific intersections – obviously, perfectly fair thing to do – but I want to refer to the overall numbers. The year before I came in, pedestrian fatalities were 65 in this city. We drove that down through a variety of Vision Zero measures – 65 year-to-date – year-to-date. At this point in 2013, the year before I came in, it was 65. In 2014, year-to-date, after a number of Vision Zero efforts had already begun, we were down to 47. Year-to-date now, we are down to 44. So if you just look at two years ago versus now – 21 fewer traffic – excuse me, 21 fewer pedestrian fatalities. That is unquestionably because of the Vision Zero initiatives, citywide. So again – 21 fewer pedestrian fatalities. Now, let me tell you about overall traffic fatalities. The year before we came in – again, year to date – 95 at this point in 2013. We started applying Vision Zero – we went down to 91 by this point in 2014. Now it is down to 81 at this point in 2015 – 14 fewer overall fatalities. That's a drop of 15 percent. So, Vision Zero is working. We have a lot more to come. There's going to be a lot more enforcement. There's going to be a lot more traffic redesign. This is going to grow in strength with every passing year. Yes, Marcia?

Question: Can we go back to the murder rate for a second? The murder rate overall in the city in the last weeks have has gone up 60 percent. And I know you've talked about it as a gang problem or [inaudible] but it's also gone up at a time when we're approaching the hot time of the summer where crime usually goes up. I'm wondering what your concerns are about this, what you want to do about it, and what do you think [inaudible] for three weeks and already the murder rate week-to-week is up 60 percent?

Mayor: Again, I don't think the week-to-week is the way to look at it. I think the way to look at it is where we're at this year compared to last year and previous years. We're still at one of the lowest murder rates we've ever had in the history of this city. We have had some [inaudible] spots that we have to work on. There's no two ways about it. There are certain precincts we have to do more in and there's certain gang issues we have to address with some additional tools. Now, we have a lot of additional tools coming online. The handheld technology is going to make a big difference. It will speed up investigations. It will speed up the ability of our officers to catch the bad guys. The ShotSpotter system that's coming online more and more is going to make a big difference. We are strategically tightening up some of our efforts to focus on where the need is greatest. So we all know about statistics. You can take different statistics and prove different things. But the fact is, thank

God, our overall rate of murder is just a small increase over recent years. We've got to do better. We're going to turn that around. But our overall crime – you know, major index crime – is down compared to last year and that has to be talked about and discussed as well. Obviously, NYPD is doing a lot of the right things and will continue to [inaudible].

Question: [Inaudible]

Mayor: I'm worried all the time about keeping people safe in the city. It's part of the job. But I also have confidence the NYPD is constantly innovating. We went through some of these ups and downs last year. I mean, I remember very vividly you were all here for every moment of the drama. There were points last year where we were very concerned things were trending in the wrong direction. What happened at the end of last year? We had set an all-time record in terms of overall crime. And obviously in terms of murders, it was the lowest number of murders we have had in decades. So, one of things I've learned by working so closely with the leadership of the NYPD and obviously with Commissioner Bratton is – they're constantly working to perfect their strategies. But this year, they have a lot of tools they didn't have last year. They have the retraining. They have the new technology. They have ShotSpotter. There's a lot they're putting to play that I think will be felt very soon.

Question: What do you think about the [inaudible]?

Mayor: They're absolutely misleading and I think they really should think twice before they continue to spread this misinformation. We made very, very clear that public employees are going to be treated like any other citizens. There are more rigorous laws. Why? Because people were dying. You know, seniors were dying. Children were dying or being grievously injured. Job one of all of us in public service is to protect people's safety, not to placate unions. So, the bottom line here is – we said, if the officer on the scene comes to the determination that it was an unavoidable accident – as with any civilian – there is no arrest. If the officer on the scene determines that it was an avoidable accident, and it would merit arrest for a civilian, there would be an arrest – even for a public employee. Very obvious example – and I believe a number of the tragic instances we've had in the last year fit this example. The pedestrian had the right of way. You know, there was a Walk sign. The pedestrian was crossing the walk sign. That should not be a situation where a pedestrian is killed. So, if the officer on the scene comes to the determination that that is [inaudible] worthy of arrest, they will engage in the arrest. They will do it respectfully. They will do it in an honorable manner as humanly possible. But it is the obligation of the NYPD to treat everyone equally and they will. Yes?

Question: [inaudible] public safety. There was a report today in the Post that [inaudible] Governor Cuomo is scouting a new barracks to have state troopers. [Inaudible] What are your thoughts on that?

Mayor: I think that reporting mischaracterized the situation. It was a small number of additional state troopers for very specific instances, as I understand it. For example, Penn Station patrols. I don't find anything to be concerned about there.

Question: [Inaudible]

Mayor: Well, obviously that's a decision the regents will make. You know, we want to work closely with the new state commissioner. There's a lot to be done and a lot of reform, as we said here today, that we want to make. And we want to have a very good and close and communicative working relationship. So we're anxiously awaiting the announcement.

Question: [Inaudible] school in Flushing where some students weren't allowed into a school carnival [inaudible]. They were put into an auditorium.

Mayor: [Inaudible] I will certainly look into it but I have not heard the facts of the specific case. It's unconscionable to not let children into a school carnival. There obviously has to be a way to allowing kids who can't afford it. So I don't want to cast judgment in this case, but I don't know all the facts. I can say, as a public

school parents, I've been to lots of public school carnivals. Obviously, no child should be excluded because they can't afford to pay.

Question: Do you think the principal should be disciplined?

Mayor: We should get the facts. And when hear the facts, I'll be able to say more.

Question: [Inaudible]

Mayor: No, we're here [inaudible]. Sorry.

Question: You've been asked a lot about Hillary Clinton and the lead up to the Democratic primaries. But former Maryland Governor Martin O'Malley is expected to announce his own presidential bid this coming weekend. I'm wondering what your thoughts are on [inaudible] candidate, what you're hoping to hear from him. I know you [inaudible]. I just want to get your thoughts –

Mayor: I don't know him and I don't know his work that well. I certainly hope he will address the question of income inequality and provide a very vigorous vision for addressing income inequality in this country. And I appreciate that he is opposed to the trade deal because I think it's a deal that will set us back economically. But, I just don't know enough about what his vision is.

Question: [Inaudible]

Mayor: I've said this many times but I'll say it again happily – again, I – I am looking forward to the day and I am optimistic – looking forward to the day when Hillary Clinton lays out her specific vision for addressing income inequality. I think what we've heard from her so far is very promising. I think her history on these issues is very powerful. I think, over the next few months, we're going to hear a lot more about her vision and that's what I'm looking at.

Question: Mr. Mayor, last week, Police Commissioner Bratton told [inaudible] that you would be open to [inaudible] warrants for low-level [inaudible]

Mayor: Well, that was a broad point that the commissioner made and one that we're going to be working on between City Hall and One Police Plaza over the coming months. None of us will entertain amnesty for serious offenses. Those have to be pursued constantly. But there may be some minor offenses where it would be a worthy action to take. But there's going to be a very vigorous process to determine if we think there's a specific reform proposal that makes sense. Yes, Hanna?

Question: [Inaudible] two more schools were evacuated [inaudible] Are there any updates to that investigation? I understand the NYPD might have [inaudible] threats about this? [Inaudible]

Mayor: Well obviously, the NYPD will address their specific actions and you should ask them directly. But I – you know, from the ongoing conversations we've had, this appears to be one or a handful of individuals. And as you know, one was specifically questioned. Look, it's very, very unfortunate. As a parent, I'm certain it makes parents very uncomfortable. But what we see here is these are pranks. We're dealing with them between the NYPD and school safety and our school officials. And we will continue to deal with them. I don't think there's anything deeper to say than that.

Question: [Inaudible]

Mayor: I'm looking forward to speaking with each and every one of the leaders in Albany. I'm looking forward to sitting down with Majority Leader Flanagan. And I think it's to emphasize why we think our core initiatives are so important to the wellbeing of the people of this city. Obviously, we'll be talking about why we need to extend mayoral control, why we need to strengthen rent regulations, why we think the reforms we've proposed

for 421-a will allow us to create a lot more affordable housing and will be fairer in terms of the use of the taxpayers' money. So, it's just a go and talk through the vision, and hear their concerns, and continue to work together — looking towards the resolution of these issues over the next three weeks or so.

Question: [inaudible]

Mayor: Well, it's well known that I am a believer in union labor, but I also am a believer in achieving the affordable housing goals that we've put forward. And the only way to achieve those goals is with an appropriate wage level for the creation of affordable housing, which obviously is not based a profit motive. It's based on a very different design. So I've expressed that to leaders in the labor movement, that — you know, this is a pretty sacred mission, from my point of view, to really produce affordable housing on a grand scale. I think there is a way to do it that accommodates union labor, but not at prevailing wage. So we're trying to find a more balanced approach.

Question: [inaudible] Some community leaders say that Latino American [inaudible] communities are disproportionately affected by the [inaudible]

Mayor: I think there's been, honestly, tremendous police presence in some of the precincts where we have [inaudible]. I think it's clear that what we have primarily here is a gang and crew problem. You know, for those of us who were here in the bad old days — when we had 2,000 murders or more a year — a lot of everyday citizens were getting caught in those crossfires. It was a horrible, horrible time. This is equally troubling when, you know, individual gang members shoot other gang members, but it's a different reality than what we used to face. It's much more localized to gangs and crews. Now, as painful as that is — and we have to end the loss of life — it also means that our police have a lot more information to work with. And increasingly — we saw this last year — part of what turned the tide last year, and why we had a record year, the lowest number of murders in a generation, is because there were some very major takedowns of gangs — you remember some of them last year. And I think you're going to be seeing a lot more of that. So, I can say to my fellow New Yorkers in all communities — a lot of resources are being applied. And where the need is greatest, that's where the greatest resources are.

Question: [inaudible]

Mayor: Correct. And that is different than what we knew in the past. It's something we're going to be putting more and more energy into addressing. [inaudible]

Question: A follow up for that. Do you get a sense for why that kind of gang activity is up?

Mayor: I'm not a criminologist, and I'm sure there's others who could give you more eloquent descriptions. Look, we've seen this all over the country on a much bigger scale than here, and we obviously are going to work very, very intensely to cut off this phenomenon at the knees here in New York City. That's why we're applying a whole host of strategies to everything from getting intervention strategies, which have worked around the country, to takedowns, which we've done on very big scale in some parts of the city, and we will continue to do. So, I think it is a larger phenomenon in our country, but one that we're going to be able to arrest. Again, this situation is not just 2015. It's been developing over several years — and yet, we had the lowest number of murders in our recent history last year. So I know the NYPD knows how to get at this problem. It's going to take a lot of intensive police work, but they will prevail.

Thank you, everyone.

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