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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO HOLDS MEDIA AVAILABILITY

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Good morning, everybody. Well, this morning, we're going to talk about the most important piece of reopening this city, restarting this city, the thing that matters so deeply to our children and our families, and that's starting our schools up again. And it is something we all feel deeply about passionately about because it's about our kids and it's about their futures and it's about their health and safety. So, we're going to talk about that today to give you a sense of what will come up ahead in September. But first I want to take a moment because it's an important time of year for so many New Yorkers. So, I want to wish our Muslim sisters and brothers a safe and blessed Eid Al-Adha. And this is a celebration that is so important in the Muslim community. It will be different this year, obviously, because of what we're all facing with the coronavirus but the community is strong. Like every community in New York City, people are sticking together, helping each other out. So, I want to say to everyone, Eid Mubarak, wish you a wonderful holiday.

Now, when we think each year about going back to school, this is a very, very important time of the year, it's a time filled with anticipation in normal years, anticipation, hope, possibility, worries, anxiety. We all know what that felt like when we were kids. And I can say this as someone who was a public school parent for the entire education of both of my kids that back to school time was always a very, very special time each year. Now this year it's filled with so many other strong emotions and this year it's filled with a whole different reality because this year it's about health and safety first. That's what we're going to be talking about today. Everything we do is going to be focused on health and safety – health and safety for our kids, our families, our educators, our school staff. And every one of us who's going to talk today is going to talk from the perspective, not just as leaders, but as parents – what we would need and expect for our own kids is exactly the way we've approached this here today. I'm not going to do anything when it comes to New York City public schools that is anything less but then – the standard I would set for my very own children. I want to know, every parent wants to know, every day are your kids safe? We have to make sure that everything we do meets that standard constantly. And if it isn't safe, we don't do it. It's as simple as that. So, a huge amount of effort has gone in to getting our schools ready, months and months of preparation. We are sparing no expense. We're going to do whatever it takes. And we understand the anxiety. We understand the fear because this city has been through so much, because we look around the country and we see really, really troubling things happening. But we also have to remember how this city has fought back.

So, every place in the country is different, every place has different approaches, but in this city over five months, we went from the worst possible situation to now being in one of the strongest situations in our nation. We fought our way back because we were all disciplined and smart about it. And now we're ready to reopen schools the right way and to serve our kids. And our

kids have been through so much. Let's remember, we have to think about the needs of parents, educators, staff, all the time. We have to make sure everyone's safe, but we also have to remember our kids and what they've been through, the challenges, the trauma, the dislocation. We owe it to them to give them anything we can to help them move forward after what they've been through. And I know for a fact – and I've talked to a lot of educators about this – that when kids are in school, there's the greatest possibility that they can learn better, that they can continue to grow and develop socially. There's so many reasons for a child to be in school, including the food they get, the health care they get, the emotional support they get. This is why it matters so much, but it has to be done safely. Now, the people have spoken. We surveyed parents – 400,000 responses to our survey, 75 percent want their kids back in the classroom, and that is exactly what we are going to do.

The plan – the essence of this plan is safety for everyone. And I need people to hear that because I know there's tremendous concern out there, but whether you're a student, parent, educator, staff member, your safety is the essence of this plan. And I can prove that by showing you all the different things that have gone into this plan and the fact that we're going to have an extremely rigorous standard for opening schools, or, if necessary, closing schools, because we are putting health and safety first. So, what are we doing? You've heard some of it before – we're using blended learning. Kids in school when they could be in school, remote when they can't, remote learning for any child, any family that prefers remote learning all the time. Social distancing guidelines in every part of the school, in the classroom and every other part of the school. Face coverings for everyone, free priority testing for everyone in the school community, making sure that teachers, kids, staff all have the personal protective equipment for free.

We are going to go to the farthest extent and what we're going to do is the thing that has helped New York City come back the whole time, which is focus on science, focus on fact, focus on data. And so, we are going to hold New York City to a very high standard, our schools to a very high standard. We will not reopen our schools unless the city infection rate is below three percent. So, every day I go over the daily indicators with you, number of people testing positive for COVID-19 citywide, unless that number is below three percent, we will not reopen schools. That number is below three percent, we will move ahead with our plan. Now, let's be clear, I'm very hopeful when I say that because New York City, thanks to all of your good efforts, has been under three percent since June 10th, six weeks in a row now. That's extraordinary. And today's indicators are very strong again. We know we can do it, but I want to hold that very tough, tough standard, because I want to keep us all focused on what we have to do to keep safety first. And this is a way of proving that we will do things the right way, setting a very tough bar, but also one I am convinced we can achieve.

So, look, we have to remember, nothing is more important in New York City than protecting our kids, helping our kids grow, helping them learn. They are our future in every sense, every family feels that. That's the path we've been on over seven years. That's what we're going to keep doing. As I turned to the Chancellor, I want to say the Chancellor and his team have worked incessantly to get this right. They've looked at examples from all over the world of what will keep the school community safe. And they've made a series of choices of how to do things from a health and safety lens first, while also making sure we can educate our kids. And I want to thank you, Chancellor, and your whole team for the work you're doing. Please give us an update.

Schools Chancellor Richard Carranza: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Mayor. First, I want to acknowledge what we all know to be true. March was extremely challenging for all of us – the entire city, the doctors, our scientists included. We're learning about this disease in real time in many cases with information that just wasn't known. It was one of the toughest times that we have faced as a city and as a school system. I also remember the fear and the confusion and the worry. So, it's important to me that we build on everything we've learned over these past five months and everything we have been through since then. We are approaching reopening by centering health and safety as our foundational approach, basing our policies on the expertise of health professionals, period. We are focusing on the science, not science fiction.

So, here's what that looks like. In New York City, tens of thousands of New Yorkers are being tested every day. And we will be asking staff to get tested in the days prior to school. The City will prioritize free testing for school-based staff with 24-hour turnaround time results at any of the 34 City-run testing locations. School-based staff members are also encouraged to opt into monthly COVID-19 testing, which is critically important. We are thoughtfully opening schools with physical distancing and cohorting of students requiring face coverings and thoroughly cleaning and disinfecting throughout the day and night. If an illness does occur, we will respond quickly, communicate clearly during investigations and promptly to share decisions to quarantine classrooms, or if necessary, close schools. This approach means that we are well equipped to mitigate risk and share critical information with our school communities. You'll hear in a moment about the different scenarios we've mapped out in partnership with our colleagues at NYC Test and Trace Corps, and the procedures that will be followed if someone tests positive in a school.

But I want to speak directly to families and members of our school communities and affirm this – your health and safety remained our highest priority. I know how hard this is. I've been a public school parent. I've been a teacher for over a decade in a classroom. I've been a principal. And I know what it feels like to want to do the best you can in education for your child or for your students while ensuring that their health and safety and your health and safety is also being attended to, that's why we're taking this approach. That's why we won't settle for anything, but the strictest and most rigorous processes for coming back to school, we have your back and that will never change.

Mayor: Thank you so much, Chancellor. And I want to – I really want to emphasize that everything the Chancellor says, everything the Chancellor's team has been working on is about the health and safety of our kids and the whole school community. They've also been putting a lot of time and energy into thinking about the emotional needs of our kids, the mental health challenges our kids have gone through. So, I wanted to just give a special thank you to you, Chancellor, to Deputy Chancellor Lashawn Robinson and her whole team. So many people at the Department of Education are really thinking about what our kids will need after going through this trauma and how coming back to school is an opportunity to really address that trauma and help them and support them. So, I want to thank you, because that's a really important part of this equation as well.

Now, when we plan with a health and safety-first perspective, we think of it very, very rigorously. That's why we're setting this really tough, rigorous standard to determine if and when we reopened. And again, right now, we are clearly meeting that standard, but we also have to be realistic when we plan. We plan for every eventuality, including when there's a problem, what

you do about that problem. So, we need to be ready if a child in a classroom becomes sick, if a child in the classroom was identified as positive with COVID-19, we need a plan for that. If it happens in more than one classroom, we need a plan for that. I want to emphasize the goal of this approach is that kids in a single classroom stay together as much as possible the whole school day with very few adults in contact with them. The whole idea of this plan is to limit the amount of movement in the school, limit the amount of people coming in contact with each other, keep kids as much as possible in the same group all day long for everyone's protection, but it also allows us, if there is, God forbid, a case to be able to act on it a lot more effectively. So, here to tell you about what we do, if there is a case in a school is the Director of our city Test and Trace Corps, Dr. Ted Long.

Executive Director Ted Long, Test and Trace Corps: Thank you, sir. As a parent myself, the safety and health of my son is always my highest priority. We've designed a tracing operation for our schools that puts the safety and health of our teachers, students, and kids like my son at the center at all times. And I'm going to walk you through some of the high points today.

Now, for a positive case, it could be reported by a parent teacher or another student. Importantly, a positive case must be laboratory confirmed. For any laboratory confirmed positive case, we have a simple rule that we use that rule – that rule is that any – the entire classroom, meaning all of the teachers – the teacher of the classroom and all of the students in the classroom will quarantine for 14 days after when that positive cases identified. Before that positive case would have been reported, if there is a child that's symptomatic in the school, we have the child or the teacher that's symptomatic in the school leave the school as soon as possible to prevent transmission of the virus to anybody else in the school. The same way any good health care policy starts with prevention, if the child or teacher is symptomatic at home, we require that the child or student stay at home and not come to this school and potentially risk infecting other people in the school. The next step in either of those two scenarios is that we want the child or the teacher to get tested at one of our more than 200 sites across New York City, free of charge.

Now, we've talked about what we want to do before the child or the teacher comes into the school. We've talked about our simple rule – again, if there's a case in a classroom, the kids, students and the teacher are going to quarantine for 14 days, no matter what. Now, what we do in addition to having that rule come into effect is we do an investigation. The investigation is done between the Department of Health and the New York City Test and Trace Corps. That investigation we'll have one of two outcomes. If there's a single case in a school – again, the rule was invoked, the classroom, meaning the students in the classroom and the teacher are going to quarantine for two weeks, 14 days, no matter what, and in addition that investigation may find that there are other close contacts of the case in the school. Those other close contacts will also quarantine at home for two weeks. During the investigation, if it's relegated to one case, the school will remain open, and when the investigation concludes the classroom and any close contact to a quarantine for two weeks.

Now, if there's more than one case in a school, and it's not in the same classroom, during the investigation by the Test and Trace Corps and the Department of Health, the school will close for 24 hours. The reason for that is we want to keep everybody safe while we do the investigation. When the investigation concludes, one of two things will happen. The first outcome could be that the classroom, again, all of the students and the teacher, would quarantine for two weeks – that's the rule that's going to happen no matter what – and any close contacts identified from either of

the two or more cases would also quarantine for two weeks, but the school can reopen. That will be outcome number one. The second outcome would be that if we believe there is transmission or risk of transmission in this school between those more than one cases, then the school has already been closed for at least 24 hours during the investigation, the school remain closed – both the classrooms, which happens either way per our rule, but also the rest of the school to ensure that everybody in the school can be safe. And then, everybody in the school quarantine for the 14-day period.

Again, as a parent myself, the safety and health of our teachers, students, and kids like my son, Dave, must be at the center of everything we do. Thank you.

Mayor: Thank you very much, Dr. Long. Everybody I'm going to go over the indicators now, and this really puts a point on the progress we've made and the progress we've got to stick with to be able to open schools effectively and then go on from there as we restart and rebuild. So, indicator number one, daily number of people admitted to hospitals for suspected COVID-19, threshold is 200 – today's report, 65 patients. Number two, daily number of people in Health + Hospitals ICU's, threshold 375 – today's report, 268. And here is the most important one, percentage of people testing citywide positive for COVID-19, threshold is 15 percent – today's report, one percent. So, again, that's the lowest we have been and that is credit to every one of you. And let's double down on that, that's how we move forward, is keeping number low.

I'm going to say a few words in Spanish, but before I do, I want to refer to a feature that you'll see over the next 95 days, because we're dealing with a lot of challenges and a lot of difficulties and a lot of trauma, as I mentioned, but we also have to remember that there's always rebirth and rejuvenation. And one of the things that's amazing about our democracy is that elections offer us a chance to decide where we want to go. And that will happen for our city and our country in 95 days.

So, let me say a few words in Spanish.

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

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

Moderator: Hi, all. We have with us here today Chancellor Carranza, Deputy Chancellor Robinson, Executive Director of the Test and Trace Corps Dr. Long, and Senior Advisor Dr. Varma. With that, we'll start with Rich from WCBS 880.

Question: Good morning, all.

Mayor: Good morning, Rich. How are you doing?

Question: In all, I'm doing okay. You know, I'm looking at this and thinking about the numbers, you know, 1.1 million kids and 1,800 schools and thinking you know what – you know, the risk here, obviously, is – obviously, at some point somebody is going to come down with something. Are you guys kind of holding your breath going into this? I mean, it just seems like such an amazing undertaking.

Mayor: It is. It's an amazing undertaking for sure, Rich. But I'm going to say the most obvious thing, this is a city that is no stranger to big, challenging, heroic tasks. And this is what it's going to take. It's going to take everyone thinking about doing something historic. And I have absolute faith in our educators and our school staff that they are up to this challenge. And I know, we know for a fact that parents and kids are ready. So, yeah, you could certainly say this is going to be tough and it's going to take a huge amount of work, but let's look at some facts that are reassuring. I mean, look at the report from the last 24 hour on cases, 312 cases for all of New York City, of which only a handful required hospitalization, because, remember, it's not just the number of folks I give in that hospital figure, but it's the number of folks who turn out to actually have COVID-19. That number – the most recent day we have information for was 11 percent only of the ones who were in the hospital actually turned out to have COVID-19. So, Rich, I say that to say, this city has beaten back this disease to an extraordinary degree. Now, we must go farther. And this is something I talked to Dr. Ted Long about literally every day about how we're going to use the Test and Trace Corps and all the other tools we have to keep squeezing this disease further and further. But you've seen in recent weeks how extraordinarily this city has fought back the coronavirus. So, Eich, that gives me hope. And the decision which I made to set that three percent bar was both a statement of rigor, but also a statement of belief that we can meet that goal because we've shown over weeks and weeks that that's where we are. So, big, tough job, but one this city is ready for. Go ahead, Rich.

Question: So, just to follow up on the same topic, the teacher's union – is the teacher's union on board in all of this? I mean, obviously there's been some pushback, but teachers – you know, there are a lot of – there's a lot of fear among teachers, especially the older ones. Are you hearing about that?

Mayor: Yeah. And I'll turn it to the Chancellor. Look, we've made it an absolute cardinal rule that all these specific plans that have been talked through with the teacher's union constantly. The Chancellor can give you a sense of just how intensive that work has been together with the two educator unions, with the unions representing staff. We have to do this the right way. It has to be health and safety first and you can only do that by talking to people who do the work. We know that folks who have real and meaningful exceptions, like preexisting conditions, we're obviously going to make accommodations for. And we know there's a lot of fear and concern among all the people who do the work, but we also know there's a lot of heroism, Rich. I mean, when we kept those regional enrichment centers open for the kids of essential workers, a lot of educators step forward, ready to serve, a lot of staff stepped forward ready to provide those meals to families that needed them. Educators are incredibly committed people. They do this work, not for fame and glory, certainly not for big payoff – they do it because they love kids and they want to support kids. So, there are so many teachers who want to get back to the classroom because they know they can help kids best in the classroom. Go ahead, Chancellor.

Chancellor Carranza: Thank you, Mayor. Rich – so, yes, we are actively engaged with all of our unions around what a return to school will look like. But I especially want to call out President Mark Cannizzaro from CSA and, and Michael Mulgrew from UFT, because we have workshopped on occasions for four-plus hours teams from each of our organizations, really going through the minutia of every single decision. Now, do we agree on everything? Absolutely not. But we do have a process where we're actually kicking the tires and we're actually pushing the envelope. The rigor that the Mayor spoke about also comes from those conversations where

we want to be able to keep folks safe. That being said, there is no one larger than New York City – we're the largest school system in America, but I, on a weekly basis, have conversations with my colleagues of the 10 largest school systems in America. And I can tell you that just two weeks ago, of the 10 largest school systems in America, there were only two cities that could even have the consideration of opening for in-person instruction – that was Chicago and New York City. As we sit here today, the only school system that is maintaining that low rate that the Mayor just talked about is New York City. So, these kinds of conversations are very localized. There's a lot of activism that's happening for good reason. We want no one to get sick, but we also have been very clear, and our Mayor has been very clear that the health and safety of our children and those who serve our children are foundational as we think about what in-person learning will look like. And our union partners are absolutely at the table with us, helping us to define and design what that looks like.

Moderator: Next we have Julia from the Post.

Question: Hey. Good morning, Mr. Mayor, Chancellor, and everybody on the call. I have a couple education questions for you today. The first is that we have a school like the Manhattan New Explorations in Science, Technology, and Math that would have a reopening plan with all instruction happening remotely. Then, you know – so I'm wondering if that would be allowed. And then what you think about schools like Stuyvesant, who have a model for just one day a week, and are all the logistics really worth it for just one day of in class instruction?

Mayor: I'll just start with a broad point before turning to the Chancellor. There are definitely going to be schools with exceptional situations either because of the, you know, huge size or because they have an approach to education that might fit better with online. But, overwhelmingly, the model here is the blended approach with two or three days in school each week, which is really going to benefit kids. This is all about – why do we even have a school system to begin with, to help our kids support our kids, prepare our kids, especially after again, everything they've been through the last five months. So I'm sure there will be some exceptional situations and the DOE will consider those. But I want to come back to what I think the vast majority of people are going to experience, which is a blended approach that really does offer real support and continuity for kids. Go ahead Chancellor.

Chancellor Carranza: So great question, in our model, we've built – we've put forward several models that we've asked schools and principals to really work with their community to consider, and again obviously understanding that we want students to have as much in-person instruction as is possible, given the circumstances of health and the security of our students and staff, notwithstanding, but another incredibly important aspect to that is we want to give some consistency to parents. Now we've said before, we're really choosing from a portfolio of imperfect solutions. So the perfect solution would be a vaccine we're back to what we were before, but absent that parents need to have some semblance of security. When are the days of the week that my child will be in person? When are the days of the week that they will be in remote learning so that they can plan what their work schedules would look like or childcare would look like. The Mayor recently announced that we're looking for over 100,000 seats for childcare it's because we understand that not everybody will have a place for that remote learning to happen. So we're trying to meet that need as well.

That being said within the modeling that we've proposed, there is a process for a school to seek an exception to the established models that we've put forward to this date. We haven't received any exceptions. We welcome any of those schools to submit an exception request and the documentation for that exception, and then we will work with them on the consideration of those exceptions. But again, it's also important to understand, Stuyvesant is a very large school. So if whatever they're going to propose, it has to be able to be implemented so that it doesn't disenfranchise or negatively impact any particular group of students inadvertently.

Moderator: Julia do you have a—

Question: Yeah, I do, on education, but a little bit of a different topic. We went through with Dr. Long, you know, what happens in the schools if someone gets sick. I'm wondering if you're going to make that information public, you know, how many people are sick and which school when there was some criticism that the DOE wasn't transparent enough about cases back in the spring.

Mayor: Absolutely, everything will be public once it's confirmed, and the spring was a situation we were dealing with absolutely the great unknown, everyone was trying to make sense of something they had never dealt with before and, and trying with real sincerity to make sense of it and do things right. But this time we are going into the situation with a whole lot more knowledge and a lot more time to prepare, and we do intend to be very transparent about what we learn school by school.

Moderator: Next, we have Andrew from NBC.

Question: Good morning, everyone. Thanks for taking my call. My first question, Mayor, you said that you're going to spare no expense open schools safely. Respectfully though wouldn't there be a much more ambitious, bigger, bolder plan out there, such as securing the streets around dozens and dozens of schools to set up outdoor classrooms, using parks for outdoor classrooms, using rooftops for outdoor classrooms? Why wasn't a bolder, more outdoor-oriented initiative set up for this reopening?

Mayor: Andrew, it's a fair question, but it's a question I think honestly misses part of the equation. I would remind you that outdoors might seem really appealing in September or June, but it's not going to be as workable say in November, December, January, February, March, second on any given day, of course you could have rain. It's unpredictable to say the least. I do think schools are looking for when they can use outdoors to make that a part of the equation, and we're going to be definitely looking to enhance that opportunity wherever we can. But my common sense first answer to you is it's not a reliable option. You can't plan on it every day. Chancellor?

Chancellor: I think you're absolutely right. Mr. Mayor, I wouldn't add anything else to that.

Mayor: Go ahead, Andrew.

Question: Well, since you talked about unpredictable weather, I assume you've seen the hurricane forecast and the possibility that a hurricane could actually be headed our way for next

week. I'm wondering whether you plan to activate the Emergency Management Center and what precautions and concerns you have at this point?

Mayor: So our Emergency Management Commissioner Criswell and I were communicating this morning about this very question. So far, the projections look pretty favorable to us. The chance of us having a substantial impact is minimal, and this would be in the early part of next week, but we're watching this hour by hour, Andrew, anytime we see a hurricane coming. Look, every one of us that went through Sandy, we never minimize the warning that our hurricane may be coming. I think we'll know a lot more in the course of the next 24 hours, and we'll have plenty of time in that case to give people appropriate instruction depending on what we learn.

Moderator: Next, we have Jillian from NY1.

Mayor: Jillian, can you hear us?

Question: Hey, can you hear me?

Moderator: Yes.

Mayor: There you go. Hey, how are you doing?

Question: Okay. I'm good, thanks. How are you doing?

Mayor: Good. Thank you.

Question: So I wanted to ask it, it seems that there is no requirement for ongoing testing at any specific interval for teachers or for students, I see that it's recommended. I'm curious why that isn't required given what we know about asymptomatic spread, particularly among young people and given the fact that Major League Baseball is testing people every two days and that system is already not working out as well as everybody hoped. Why not require testing?

Mayor: Yeah, I mean, Major League Baseball is obviously a very different world for a lot of reasons, and their reality is they're moving constantly between different cities, including in places that are having a horrible upsurge in this disease. We are talking about New York City, which thank God is doing quite well because of everyone's hard work. We want the maximum testing. We're talking of course about hundreds of thousands of educators and staff members, 1.1 million kids. We wanted to figure out the balance point of what was the right way to do things and attainable too, and we think a strong message that says to all the adults, you know, go get tested, it's free. We're going to make it a priority – you will be prioritized for being tested. That that's the right approach, and we know a lot of people want to get that testing, and so that's what we're going to keep doing – constantly making it available for free, and we think a lot of people take us up on that. Do you want to add either one of you?

Chancellor Carranza: No, sir. You covered it.

Mayor: Okay, thank you. Go ahead, Jillian.

Question: And then my second question is, is probably one for the Chancellor and it's – can you walk us through a little bit how this would work in a high school or even a middle school setting where kids typically aren't programmed to be together for the whole day? So you might have math class with a different set of kids. Then you have English class with, or at the very least you'll have a different teacher for math and English. So I'm trying to understand how you can limit exposure in that way, because even if you kept all the kids together, if you have different teachers cycling in, and then those teachers go with other kids – obviously that could lead to many classrooms being closed if there is an exposure rather than just one. So can you walk us through the logistics of that?

Mayor: Let me start and pass to the Chancellor. You know, Jillian, just to put it in context again, with New York City at the level we are now and the level we would require to reopen our schools, I do think whenever we're able to keep a classroom together, so some people are calling it a pod, some people calling a cohort, but the idea is, you know, that small group of kids stays together throughout the day, and then the goal as much as possible is just plug in a teacher or teachers into that it really does limit the number of people that come in contact, and it makes the tracing obviously a lot clearer if you need to do tracing. You're right, the higher you go up, the more kids historically have moved around buildings where I had different teachers, but we're right now, re-engineering that as much as humanly possible to limit the number of people who interact with each other, and remember, everyone's wearing a face covering, everyone's six feet apart, constant cleaning. This is not like the scenario we experienced in March. It's not like a lot of other things we see around the country. This is a very rigorous approach. If you're in that building, you have to follow all those rules. If you're not feeling well in the morning, you have to stay home, and I want to emphasize that we're saying that all parents, if your child is sick, you must keep your child home. There's layers upon layers of precaution in this, but to your question, and I'll turn to the Chancellor, we really are actually working to not make it like traditional middle school or high school where there's so much movement where we're really working right now to limit that. Go ahead.

Chancellor Carranza: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. Jillian, great question. So the complexity of programming, especially at the secondary level, middle schools and high schools is not lost upon us. There's a myriad of different concerns. I think there are, there are two main topics that I want to just reemphasize that the Mayor has talked about and that Dr. Long has also talked about, the concept here is to limit the interaction between groups of students and large groups of students. So because we're limiting the interaction and I just want to be very transparent with everyone, that's watching school, in-person school, this fall will not be the same as it was last fall. You just cannot have that kind of an environment given all of the safety requirements, the social distancing requirements, all of the things that we have to do to be preventative as the Mayor has talked about. So I just want to set the level of expectation. It will not look the same, but we think that the benefits of being in person with teachers are really important for us to be able to have this alternate way of going to school, and the really good thing about New York City is we have incredibly, incredibly innovative and out of the box thinkers in terms of our principals and teachers and school leadership teams that are right now grappling at how do we keep this concept of limiting interaction, but also get to as much of that middle school, high school experience as we can.

Mayor: Amen.

Moderator: Next, we have Lilliana from Univision.

Question: Good morning, everyone. Thank you for taking my call.

Mayor: Good morning.

Question: My question would be for the Chancellor. If he can give us a brief description of this plan in Spanish for our Hispanic public?

[Chancellor Carranza speaks in Spanish]

Mayor: Go ahead Lilliana.

Question: Could you also send a message to the parents who still worry about sending their kids to school?

Mayor: You want that in Español?

Question: I would love to.

[Chancellor Carranza speaks in Spanish]

Moderator: Next. We have Christina from Chalkbeat.

Question: Hi Mayor and Chancellor, thanks for taking my question questions. The first is if there is a three percent or greater than three percent rate and schools cannot open what's the plan then, is there a childcare care plan, much like the rec centers that we've had up until now?

Mayor: So again, so the three percent I want to make sure I understand is on a seven-day rolling basis, so seven-day average to open schools, and that would also be the standard we'd hold if at any point we saw it go above that number. That would be a reason to close schools across the board. So very rigorous, careful standard. The obvious plan B is everyone goes to remote learning. We obviously had to figure out how to do that under very, very tough circumstances before, and I've learned a lot about how to do that childcare, we're working to develop that plan. The plan we put in motion again is for 100,000 kids and we are working to develop that further. So that plan is going to move forward no matter what, because the other thing to remember, Christina, you, I'm sure I've thought about this a lot given the publication you work for, we have to also prepare ourselves for a very nonlinear experience. The school year proceeds over, you know, 10 months, and the fact is we don't know what it's going to look like for that whole period of time. Our hope and dream is a vaccine real soon – everyone gets vaccinated, we're back to full strength, but we may have times where things get better, we have times that things go worse. We have to be able to go into full remote, if necessary. We need to be able to come out of full remote. So the childcare is going to be ready in any situation and again, we hope to build upon that and add more seats. Go ahead.

Question: Thanks, and the second question is the CDC guidance, and maybe I'm not reading it correctly. I'm not a public health official. But the CDC guidance seems to suggest closing down entire schools and not just classrooms when there is a case within a school community. So what

health guidance is this plan based on and why not? Both the stricter route of closing down entire schools.

Mayor: Let me start and I'll turn to Dr. Varma and Dr. Long. So first of all, remember that our version of this whole approach is based on what New York is doing, which is obviously in so many ways more rigorous than what's being done in other parts of the country. We are layering all these health and safety measures in place simultaneously. We're also very devoted to that pod approach, so that we're going to have kids limited in who they come in contact with. And that means if you have a case that, you know, God forbid you have a case, but if you have a case in a classroom, it gives us the real potential to keep that from spreading outside that classroom by isolating everyone who has been in contact with a classroom. But if you've got a school, for example, with a thousand kids in it and you are able to limit the reality just to one classroom and quarantine all those folks, it stands to reason that everyone else, you know, 900 plus other students should not have their education shut down if we're able to effectively handle that situation. Dr. Varma, Dr. Long, you want to add in terms of the approach we're taking here?

Senior Advisor Varma: Great, thank you very much. I think it's important to recognize that the guidance that comes from CDC and most other public health agencies is focused on cases who were infected and anybody who meets the definition of a close contact. Here in New York City we're actually taking what I think is one of the most rigorous approaches that I've seen anywhere else in the world. We are, first of all, we're going to do all of the measures that the Chancellor and the Mayor and Dr. Long had described to prevent infections. But we're also going to act very swiftly and promptly if there is a case, take the cautious approach to quarantine the classroom, potentially if there's more than one place, quarantine more than one classroom and take the time to really investigate rigorously, and I think that really does strike the appropriate balance between ensuring that kids continue to receive that the education that's so important while also making sure that our protection measures are as strong as they are anywhere in the world.

Executive Director Long: And I would add that the CDC guidance has an array of considerations for precaution which all make a lot of sense and we're achieving or surpassing nearly all of the considerations that the CDC lays out there. So the CDC guidance is very helpful and we are definitely taking that into consideration as we design an extraordinarily rigorous program with all precautions.

Mayor: Go ahead.

Moderator: Last two for today. Next we have Sonia from 1010WINS.

Question: Hi Mr. Mayor. Is a vaccine the only thing that can return schools to pre-pandemic conditions and what happens when there is a vaccine, will every student and staff member be required to get it? And what happens if the infection rate becomes something close to zero without a vaccine?

Mayor: Fantastic questions Sonia, you know, I think you're reading our minds. We've asked a lot of these questions and what I say is this, the goal you're absolutely right. The goal of everything we're doing is to drive down the level of infection even without a vaccine. So the entire concept of building out a massive test and trace operation, sticking with social distancing, sticking with face coverings, all of these precautions is so that we don't just stay in place, I mean

we're at a remarkably low level right now, but we think we can push this down lower even without a vaccine. Is it conceivable to get to a near zero without a vaccine and open up schools even more? I think it's conceivable, I think it's difficult, but I think it is conceivable. This is my view, I want to hear – the doctors will obviously I'm sure offer notes of caution, but what I can say definitively, Sonya because we've had multiple conversations on this in the last few weeks is, so let's say that lately we're averaging around 300 identified cases per day in New York City, we were down even below 200 a few days ago - one of our days – we think we can really drive that down substantially with a lot of work and also people sticking to the discipline and really focusing on the quarantine for folks coming in from out of state. So the more we do that effectively, it might really open up some additional options with schools. Nothing would be as clean and clear as a vaccine, but you know what, we might find some options. As to what we would do if we have a vaccine? We haven't figured out all of those protocols yet, but I think we're going to be very vigorous about saying when a vaccine is here, that we need people to get it so that we can once and for all turn the page in our school system and in our city. Dr. Varma, Dr. Long, you want to add to that?

Executive Director Long: Yeah, just a couple - please, after you Dr. Varma?

Senior Advisor Varma: Okay. Yeah, I think the only point that I would try to emphasize is that we are planning for every possible scenario. We are in constant and active discussions with CDC and other vaccine experts around the country to really understand what are the leading candidates and what are the issues that are going to be need to be addressed right now in the next few months well before there is a vaccine so that we can make sure it becomes as available to New Yorkers as possible as soon as one or more become available.

Executive Director Long: And the only thing I wanted to add is actually just, I agree with the question and the premise that you're coming at this with. So since the epidemic started, we now have the lowest levels of new cases, hospitalizations, ED visits that we've seen and we're driving it down even further. So I almost want to agree with you that the purpose of the Test and Trace Corp and everything that New Yorkers have earned is to keep the virus suppressed, but further drive down the levels as much as we can together, and I think we've seen that over the last couple of months.

Mayor: And for all of you viewing at home, an ED visit is an emergency department. We call it emergency room, non-doctors, so always have to watch out with the educators and the doctors on their non-civilian terminologies. Sonia, did you have a follow-up question?

Question: Thank you, that answers my question.

Mayor: You're good? Okay, great. Go ahead.

Moderator: Last one for today, we have Jessica from WNYC.

Question: Hi Mayor. How are you?

Mayor: Good, Jessica, how are you?

Question: I'm okay. So my question is – one of them – is why use the three percent threshold when the five percent is so widely accepted?

Mayor: Because we have a particular challenge here in New York City. We were the epicenter. There's tremendous concern, tremendous trauma that people have been through, and also the conditions of this city. We're one of the most densely populated places in the country. We fought so hard to come back from this disease. We're going to be very cautious to not let there be a resurgence. We see resurgences and other places, and we've tracked the pattern carefully, and it's why we are being really rigorous about not allowing a certain types of indoor entertainment, for example, and continuing to be really rigorous about social distancing and face coverings. We're going to stick to that. So by setting this three percent goal, we're sending a message. Health and safety first, we need to stay tough and discipline to get to the point we can start schools and then to keep them open, we believe we can do it. Absolutely believe we can do it. But if you got to three and a half percent, four percent, five percent, you'd have a level of cases each day that we don't think is appropriate for having schools open. We also don't think is appropriate in terms of what would happen to the trajectory for the whole city. If we're at that kind of level, we would want our school shut down as part of a larger strategy to contain the virus and stop a resurgence from growing. Go ahead, Jessica.

Question: Right. So my other question is – my understanding is that if there are two different cases in two classes, and the classes quarantined while they are investigating, what would trigger a school closure? What are the kinds of things that investigators will be looking at to determine how widespread this is in a school?

Mayor: I'll start and I'll turn to Dr. Long. Jessica, look again, we're trying to build this pod approach, this, you know, cohort classroom, whatever you want to call it, that kids are really, generally speaking together, and with very few adults to the max extent possible. We're trying to right now perfect that, and as the Chancellor said, it is very different than what we're used to and we got to get our kids and families ready for that. It will feel different. It's not forever. It's for a few months we hope until there's a vaccine. But the reason I say that is, again, it is thoroughly conceivable that you could have a case and then that's in one classroom. And then another case comes up in the same classroom. And that that can be contained to that cohort and not spread to the rest of the school. It is absolutely, in the way we're setting things up, absolutely attainable because students are not going to be in regular contact with people outside their pod in the vast majority of cases. So you have to, in the same group, you look at one way. If you have two from separate groups, that's when the level of concern increases, that's when we're going to be even more cautious. Go ahead, Dr. Long.

Executive Director Long: Well, yes, actually the Mayor covered all of the key points. I'll just add a couple of notes. First we want to have, again, a clear and decisive rule that 100 percent of the time if there is a case, be it the student or the teacher in a classroom, that classroom will be immediately quarantined for two weeks, everybody in that classroom, then when we're doing the investigation, if there's more than one case in two different classrooms, let's say there's two cases. If we can know through that investigation, that one case was linked to a parent that had traveled and the other was linked to another parent that had traveled to another state, and both of those parents respectively also been diagnosed with the coronavirus, then we know how the chain of transmission worked for each of those two respective cases and by having immediately quarantined the classrooms, we believe that we have achieved control and that we can reopen the

rest of the school. Now in a different scenario, if there's two students in two different classrooms, but we can't know for sure, and that's where the investigation comes in, where they contracted the virus from, there could be transmission going on in the school. So we, before we even started the investigation had already in that scenario closed the school temporarily to make sure that there wasn't any further transmission, so we took immediate action to keep everybody safe. But if we can't know for sure that there's no further transmission going on in this school, then we will determine that was outcome two, and what I talked about earlier that will keep the school closed and everybody in the school quarantined for 14 days. So that's the two types of scenarios with those two outcomes being either closed the classrooms and keep them quarantined along with close contacts or close the school if we believe there's a risk of transmission going on in the school.

Chancellor Carranza: Mr. Mayor?

Mayor: Please.

Chancellor Carranza: Just to add a non-medical perspective to that question as well. So when we talk about closing the school, we're talking about closing the physical environment of the school, but it also triggers immediate remote learning for those students. So they're not, not learning, but they're just not doing it in person. So I just want to make that point because it's not like snow days of the past, they will continue learning, but they immediately switched to a remote learning mode.

Mayor: Exactly and really important point that at any point any family can choose to move to remote learning. And this is something, and again, this is how I want to close and it picks up on the question that Rich Lamb asked in the beginning about just the sheer extent of this undertaking. I mean, this is a massive, massive effort, but this is the place that can do it. In New York City people are not afraid of hard work and they're not afraid of a challenge. And so we're creating a system where literally as many kids need remote learning, it will be there for them while simultaneously creating the maximum opportunity for kids to be in the classroom because we know that's where kids learn best, get the support they need emotionally, get the food, get the health support, there are so many positive outcomes that come from a kid being in a classroom with a compassionate trained adult who is there to support them.

So we're going to be moving on those tracks simultaneously. It is a big, big endeavor, but we're up to it in this city. And why do I know that? Because I've seen what this city has done many times before and I've seen how heroically New Yorkers have fought back the coronavirus to the point that everyone around the country is looking to the model of New York City as an example that it can be done. I'm particularly moved by the heroism of our educators and our school staff who when asked to immediately turn on a dime and create a whole new system in the spring, they did it. And they did it with tremendous energy and real commitment to our kids. I'm moved by our parents and family members who did everything they knew how to help kids keep learning and to support them. I'm moved by our kids. I'm moved by our students. They've been through a challenge that no New York kids have ever been through before, and they've stuck with it and they're keeping their spirit together. They're keeping focused on the future. They need our help and support. They expect all of us adults to do everything in our power to give them the best possible future, and not to be afraid to go the extra mile for them, they expect us to stretch and reach and go as far as we can to help them move forward, especially after everything that

they've been through. So that's what this plan shows. We're going to be there for the kids in New York City and we're going to do it with a focus on health and safety first. Thank you, everybody.

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