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**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR BILL DE BLASIO, SCHOOLS CHANCELLOR CARRANZA  
VISIT NEW PRE-K FOR ALL CENTER IN BAY RIDGE**

**Mayor Bill de Blasio:** Good morning, everyone. This is – this is a joyous day. I just saw the future. I saw what the future of early education is in the borough of Brooklyn and in the City of New York and the future looks really good and I want to commend everyone who has been part of our early childhood initiative that started with Pre-K, is now going to 3-K, and it's making a huge, huge difference in the lives of our children and our families. Now, there's lots of people who deserve a lot of credit, I want to just start with – sorry Chancellor – but these are my very favorite people, the Pre-K team, let's give them a round of applause.

[Applause]

So, from the very beginning when we announced the Pre-K initiative and brought it life, what we realized that there had to be deep, deep engagement with parents to help them understand the value of early child education, to make sure they could find a place that worked for them, and it wasn't going to happen just by going online. It had to be a very human approach. You had to have someone you could talk to, someone who can answer questions, someone who could help navigate the system for you, and that's where these extraordinary individuals came in and they really made Pre-K come alive for parents in this city. And I've been with them in a lot of different places, out in communities, after worship services, at houses of worship, at street fairs, in barber shops and beauty salons, wherever the people are there, you will find them. And they have done an extraordinary job and part of why Pre-K has been such a huge success is because of these folks.

Well I also want to say this is a really special way for us to mark the progress of Pre-K and the emergence of 3-K here in Brooklyn. And as part of City Hall in Your Borough, it's important to recognize that this site is answering a deep, deep need here in this community. It's long been known, I remember very vividly when we started Pre-K, one of the places that needed it the most is right here. I remember looking at the maps with the folks who were originally planning it and they said that District 20, there is just overwhelming need and we got to figure out a way to answer that need, we don't have enough space, we've got to do something different, and the solution was to create an early childhood center. Something beautiful and state of the art for the children and the parents of this community and that I remember vividly in 2014 that was just a

dream, and it's really, really moving to be here today when it's a reality. So I want to congratulate everyone who's been a part of this. First of all, I really want to emphasize School Construction Authority, SCA, they're amazing.

[Applause]

Melanie La Rocca, the Vice President for Operations, you've done an outstanding job. Let's give Melanie –

[Applause]

Give it up for Melanie.

[Applause]

SCA, I've said it before, it bears repeating, SCA used to not be an acronym people liked to say. People did not – some time ago, if you said well SCA is coming – it did not suggest big things were going to happen fast. Today's SCA does big things fast and does a lot at once, and congratulations to you, Melanie, and to you Lorraine Grill, and everyone on your team. Here in this district, and this is a really wonderful school district with very involved parents, wonderful educators, thanks to the Superintendent Karina Costantino, thank you so much for your great work.

[Applause]

And the Early Childhood Director for this district who's really, really proud of this new place, Dianne Gounardes, thank you.

[Applause]

So this is proof positive that the voices of our parents can be heard and we can make things happen that they need for their children. And a community once known for not having enough Pre-K, is now going to have what it really needs and I want to remind you, centers like this that are being built around the City can handle both Pre-K and 3-K, so there are going to be part of the development of our whole vision for early childhood education. And it's an exciting vision, because the day is coming not long from now in New York City where every child will be guaranteed a seat in 3-K and Pre-K. Two full years of guaranteed, high quality, free early childhood education. And for a lot of families that was impossibility not long ago. And it's so important because it is the time we can do the most good for our children.

I know the Chancellor can speak better than I about the educational impact of Pre-K and 3-K, but I can tell you as a parent it's amazing how kids learn and grow in those early years, and they are just hungry for knowledge. And if you give it to them, they will take it in, and they will grow even faster. And if they don't get it they will not be able to reach their full potential. This is all about fairness, this is all about giving every child an equal shot at reaching their potential. And

we talk a lot about wanting to be the fairest big city in America, this is one of the most essential things we can do in the name of fairness is make sure every child is given that chance.

I have to tell you, it used to be that early childhood education was not a right, it was a privilege. We're trying to flip that. We want to make sure it is a right for every child and every parent in this city. Now this school opens in literally just days, in a few weeks, it will eventually bring 250 early childhood education seats right here to this district. Isn't that amazing, 250 new seats.

[Applause]

And I got to tell you, as we build out this vision, and it's going to take a lot of work because the plan is that every single district, 32 districts in this city, that every single one will have 3-K by September 2021. Three years from now. This vision is necessary for the future of our city but it takes audacity to achieve it and this is what gives me hope, when I see what can be done, and by the way, state of the art, for all of you who were on the tour, I mean this is as good as it gets. These classrooms have everything and they're beautiful, and they're inviting, and they're energetic, this is exactly what we need to give our kids the very, very best. So it's a great day, it's all a part of creating a fair city, and when you look at this center and you look at what it's going to do for our children, it proves that we can not only be the fairest big city in America, we can be the smartest big city in America too because our kids are going to get the start they deserve.

[Applause]

Just a few quick words in Spanish -

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

I also want to note for all of you that Bay Ridge sounds the same in Spanish as it does in English.

[Laughter]

And now the Councilman from Bay Ridge, *el concejal de Bay Ridge*, who is a big backer of these important initiatives to help the kids in his community, Councilman Justin Brennan.

[Applause]

[...]

**Mayor:** There is so much to comment on in those very few minutes of – but I just want to say, even though I believe in our new approach to education, in you're the box of rocks really worked out well. It turned out good. However, one of the most important initiatives of Chancellor Richard Carranza was to ban the use of rocks in our Pre-K classroom. He said that is just not a good idea. We have something better and you can see it over her in this beautiful new center, so no one knows better what's going to give our kids the start they deserve than our Chancellor. Welcome, Richard Carranza.

**Schools Chancellor Richard Carranza:** No more rocks!

[Laughter]

**Mayor:** He has decreed!

[Laughter]

**Carranza:** I think it's something we can all get behind. Mr. Mayor, Councilman, thank you. Thank you. Thank you for being here. And for the residents here of Bay Ridge, I want to say this is equity and excellence in action. This is E & E in action. And when you think of a school, when you think of a preschool in the heart of a community, that's what should be happening in every community across this great city. But we're so proud here in District 20 that we have a state of the art facility that our youngest learners will be able to come and explore and make meaning of the world, and play with purpose, but also learn to read and also learn how to interact with each other so that when they matriculate into kindergarten they are coming with a full head of steam and pushing the envelope.

That's what we want for our students and we don't think, and Mr. Mayor I love what you said, Pre-K education, I'll even add one more grade, a 3K education, is not a privilege; it should be the right of every New Yorker. So we're very, very excited about this building, 250 students will be able to have interactive whiteboards, new schoolyard playgrounds, multipurpose room, family community – and I love this – a family and community meeting room so that the community is part of the educational process as well. And more than anything, we know that if we invest in great schools, that we will get great residents. We will get great New Yorkers as we go forward. So I want to take this opportunity to also thank the very visionary leadership of our Mayor, Mayor de Blasio, in putting it out from his very first day in office in saying we are going to invest in earliest learners knowing that as they matriculate up through the educational system they will be much more prepared but they will be much more advanced as they go forward.

And I also want to take the opportunity to thank the residents of New York and especially in Brooklyn for supporting the educational initiatives that you see here today. We can't do it without you and I'm so proud – this is an example of how we're going to do it with you, right here in District 20, right here in Brooklyn.

[Chancellor Carranza speaks in Spanish]

And Mr. Mayor I have to tell you I was with you yesterday, your Spanish is getting better and better!

[Laughter]

**Mayor:** I'm listening to you –

**Carranza:** Better and better.

**Mayor:** I'm listening to you –

**Carranza:** Very good, very good. So with this, I can hardly wait to have young souls running around and learning – not throwing rocks – but hopefully playing in the interactive equipment that we have for play and for all of us in this neighborhood, enjoy this. This is your learning center where we get to impact our youngest learners. Congratulations!

[Applause]

**Mayor:** Yes, yes. Well, everyone I want to leave you with this last point. For a long time our kids didn't get what they deserved. Now they're getting the very, very best. When you walk through this center, this is as good as it gets anywhere in New York City, anywhere in the world. So to everyone in District 20, to everyone in the School Construction Authority, I want to say on behalf of our parents and our children: thank you for giving them the very best. Let's give them a big round of applause.

[Applause]

Thank you, everyone.

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