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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO HOLDS MEDIA AVAILABILITY

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Good morning, everyone. Every day, I'm going to be talking to you about what we need to do to move this city forward. Every day, I'm going to be talking to you about a recovery for all of us, how we reach every part of this city and keep moving forward. And we all know nothing is more important in our recovery than our public schools. We know that as our public schools come back, our city comes back. We had a great day yesterday, reopening our middle schools. Amazing day, just filled with spirit and hope and a sign of things to come in New York City. Today, 1,200 New York City schools opened. A sign of our rebirth. So, we know how important it is to move our school system forward. And for the last three years, we've had extraordinary leadership of the New York City public schools by our Chancellor, Richard Carranza. For three years, he's given his heart and soul to the kids of this city, and it's been a labor of love. I've worked shoulder to shoulder with him. I've seen it. And a lot has happened in these three years to move us forward. This is a school system today with the highest graduation rate in the history of New York City. This is a school system today where academic achievement keeps moving forward, but not just in some places all across our school system. This is a New York City today where we're closing what has been called previously, the achievement gap. We're bringing more fairness and equality. We're helping uplift students of color and helping them move forward like never before. And that was our challenge before COVID. We now face a deeper challenge with a COVID achievement gap. This is going to be all of our business going forward. Bringing back our schools, bringing back our kids, helping them catch up, and then move forward academically, but also addressing and supporting them emotionally.

That's what a lot of the work will be for the remainder of this school year, but particularly starting in September, when we reset the whole equation, when we bring everyone back. But over these three years Richard Carranza has kept us moving forward, strong academic performance, great strides for fairness and equality. He has proven that we can and must do both. And he's had a lot of great moments as our Chancellor and before in his career, leading other school systems, most notably when they helped bring Houston back after Hurricane Harvey, helped bring those schools back. And I'm sure at the time he thought that would be the last major disaster he would face as a school leader. He and all of us could not have imagined this pandemic. But he's persevered, and he has brought our schools through whether it was a turn to remote in the spring, which was done with extraordinary capacity by our educators and our school staff, led by our Chancellor, the efforts to close the digital divide, getting those devices, hundreds of thousands in the hands of kids that needed them, and then most powerfully bringing our schools back, starting in September. They said it couldn't be done, everyone. Major school systems across the country, major cities didn't even dare to try. But, New York City, we said we could. Our Chancellor led the way. And how beautiful yesterday to see middle school back.

I'm going to turn to the Chancellor for his announcement. He is turning the page and going on to a new chapter in his life and we're going to miss him. But I'm also going to be introducing to you in a few moments a new leader from our school system, someone who has worked her way up and is ready to lead this school system, and someone with an extraordinary story of her own. And when I introduce to you Meisha Ross Porter, I'm going to tell you a true New York City story of success. And this is going to be a story also of continuity because it's important to know that Meisha Ross Porter in her journey was elevated from principal to superintendent by our first Chancellor, Carmen Farina, and then from superintendent to executive superintendent by Chancellor Richard Carranza. So, this is a story of people who share values, who believe in the same things, who do the same work supporting each other, and the torch being passed from one to the next. With that – and it's a bittersweet moment and someone I admire so much, our Chancellor. And we have been through it all together. I think that's a fair statement.

Schools Chancellor Richard Carranza: Yes, sir.

Mayor: I admire everything that you've done for our city. I admire your heart and your passion for justice and equality. And it has been a very tough year and I know you have felt it deeply. And somehow you found a way to keep providing leadership for our families and our kids. But I also know it took a toll, and I admire you for everything you've done. And we thank you and we're going to miss you, but we're going to be feeling the effects of what you've done for the kids in New York City for many years to come. And now introduce our Chancellor, Richard Carranza.

Chancellor Carranza: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. This is a very bittersweet moment for me. I came to New York City three years ago with a mission to help the Department of Education reach its full potential and, of course, to serve and to lift up all, not just some, but all of our public school children. And while the work is never done, we have created a lot of important change together. New York City public schools are the strongest schools I've ever seen. They are home to the most powerful teaching I have seen in my over 30 years as an educator. Our teachers and school staff take an equity-centered belief and approach so that our students can feel seen and heard, but most importantly, believed in.

Just yesterday I visited the South Bronx Academy for Applied Media to see public service announcements that middle school students had created about issues that were important to them. And in our discussion, I didn't just hear their research and their citations, I witnessed their strong, critical thinking skills and how they were making sense of the world, a world that's changing before their very eyes. I heard all the wisdom and passion of children who know their voices' value. Students who are getting a great education and who believe in all the things that they can do with that great education, students who are already connecting what happens in the classroom with their lives outside of school. Our children are where children can – our schools are where children can develop their dreams and then chase those dreams regardless of the language they speak or the neighborhood they live in. I'm proud of what we've accomplished over the last three years.

Our seniors have continued to break their own records with rising graduation rates and college enrollment rates. We have capped the length of suspensions and implemented restorative practices in the largest school system in America. We make true progress in dismantling

structures and policies that are products of decades of entrenched racism like suspending school screens. And we finally brought mental health into the spotlight and made it a major priority, which has been tremendously crucial during this pandemic. The change we've created together will help lift up generations of children to come. And I want to be really clear that this is because of the incredible work of the entire Department of Education family.

To all my colleagues at the Department of Education. It is incredibly hard to say goodbye to you. And in my culture, we don't say goodbye. We say, hasta luego, until we see you again. You are the most dedicated, hardworking colleagues I have ever had the privilege of working with. And it's been my privilege to be your colleague. I know the pandemic has not been easy for you or for any New Yorker. And make no mistake, I am a New Yorker. While not by birth by choice. A New Yorker who has lost – a New Yorker who has lost 11 family and close childhood friends to this pandemic and a New Yorker who, quite frankly, needs to take time to grieve. I feel that I can take that time now because of the place that we are in and the work that we have done together. We have created safe learning environments for the children of essential workers. We've delivered over half-a-million devices for remote learning. We've served 80 million meals to New Yorkers and reopened nearly all of our schools ahead of every other school system in America. We have stabilized the system in a way that no one thought possible. The light, my fellow New Yorkers, is truly at the end of the tunnel.

And I can't think of anyone who would be better to lead this work and take up this mantle and serve New York City's – serve New York City's children as the next New York City Schools Chancellor, than Meisha Ross Porter. She's a born and bred New Yorker. She eats drinks, sleeps, and thinks at all times about New York and the children of New York. She's dedicated her lifetime to serving the children in New York. And I am so proud that this mayor has chosen the first African-American Black Chancellor to take the baton. It's been an honor of a lifetime to serve as your Chancellor, and from the bottom of my heart I want to thank you for the opportunity to serve your and my children.

[Chancellor Carranza speaks in Spanish]

Mr. Mayor –

Mayor: That was absolutely beautiful, Chancellor. And everyone, look, I think you just got a window into the good heart and soul of this man who I've worked so closely with these last three years. To go through so much, to go through so much loss, but still somehow find a way to do so much for our children and our families is extraordinarily admirable. And what a spirit, what a powerful spirit you have. Thank you for all you have done for us. We've had a lot of good times together and we fought back through so many crises. But Chancellor, I just want you to know, we're always going to remember what you've done here and there are better days ahead. There are days ahead when we'll get to do the thing we want to do most which is visit classrooms full of children. And I also want to say on a personal note, there's one thing I did not get to experience in my time with the Chancellor, who also, in addition to being a great academic leader and someone who fights for social justice, is a great musician as well. I never got to see you gig. So, when this is all over and everything's open again, I look forward to seeing one of your performances. And I know that's one of the things that brings you joy.

Chancellor Carranza: Count on it.

Mayor: And that'll be a good day. That will be a celebration day.

Chancellor Carranza: Yes, sir.

Mayor: Well, we pass the torch now. And again, this is a story of New York City and the greatness of New York City. Because when you hear the story of Meisha Ross Porter, you hear about someone who cares, someone from this city who wanted to really do something for children who she understood because she lived their lives too. Born and raised in Southeast Queens, moved to the Bronx, fell in love with the Bronx, and became a fighter for the Bronx. Meisha is someone who understands what it is to go through everyday life without privilege and to have to earn and then fight for every single step. Meisha's heart always told her to go where the need was greatest. And so, as she kept elevating in her career, she didn't say, 'send me someplace easy.' She always wanted to be where she could do the most good, particularly for kids who looked like her. And she made that choice throughout her career. But very early on, those around her noticed that she was not just a typical educator. She had something special. From her first experiences as a teacher, leaders took notice and they kept indicating her, singling her out as one of the leaders of tomorrow. When it was time to choose the prestigious fellowships and the opportunities for further advancement, one after another after another turned to Meisha. A lot of great leaders and educators saw in her someone singularly able not only to lead academically, but to bring her heart and soul to the mission in a way that everyone could feel, that all the teachers around her, everyone who worked in school buildings could feel, that kids could feel, parents could feel. It's something – this work, this precious work of educating our children, it's work of the mind, but it's also a work of the heart.

And Meisha has both in such extraordinary measure. She became a renowned principal in the Bronx. And as I said, Chancellor Carmen Farina, when looking for new leadership, saw what Meisha brought and made her a superintendent. When Richard Carranza became our Chancellor and he looked to restructure our system and create a stronger leadership structure, he elevated Meisha Ross Porter to executive superintendent for all of the Bronx. And the Bronx alone, the number of schools, number of students in the Bronx would be one of the largest school districts in the nation if it stood alone. And over these last three years, Meisha has led it with incredible ability. Someone who really listens to the community, helps people have a sense of common direction, brings people together. She is someone who has fought for those who have not gotten their fair share, and she believes in excellence and education, but also fairness and equality in education. And she's lived that. She's made it come alive.

And yes, she will make history as the first African-American woman to lead the New York City public schools in the entire history of New York City. And as we all know, this is by far the largest school system in America. So, this is a moment of national importance that an African-American woman will take the helm of the nation's greatest public school system. I am so proud as a New Yorker of this great New York City success story. I'm so proud that once upon a time, a young woman believed she could do something great and uplift folks who've been left behind. And then she proceeded to do just that. And at this crucial moment, we need continuity, and we need strength. We need a leader who understands what's going on, on the ground and is going to see us through to the next step, opening up our high schools and then bringing back our whole school system strong in September. And I am absolutely certain of her leadership. And it is my

honor to introduce to you the next Chancellor of the New York City public schools, Meisha Ross Porter.

Incoming Schools Chancellor Meisha Ross Porter: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. I am so honored for this opportunity. Thank you, Chancellor Carranza. It has been a great joy and privilege to lead and to learn from you as a leader. And I want to thank the Mayor and the Chancellor for seeing me. And what I want to promise to all of the New York City families, students, educators, that I will see you in the same way that folks have seen me. I want to thank my husband and my family for being here to support me in this moment. And I want to also thank my New York City Department of Education family, because this moment isn't about me. It's about the story of us and what we're going to do together to move this system forward. I grew up in South Jamaica, Queens. My mom is a teacher and what I learned first from my favorite teacher, my mommy, is the importance that one teacher makes in the life of every young person. And I learned that from my mom. I learned that from my aunt, Brenda, who was my pre-K teacher. I learned that from my first grade teacher, Miss Perlman. And I learned it from Ms. [inaudible] the English teacher who saw me when I was having my own personal struggles as a 10th grade student in high school.

And because of all of that, I know with certainty, it's my duty and responsibility that I've carried with me my whole life to lead forward and lean in and see every student and create opportunities for them in every moment that I possibly can. And the Bronx, well you know me. I've dedicated my life to service in the Bronx. I've dedicated my life to education in the Bronx. I started as a youth organizer with a youth group called Take Charge, Be Somebody in Highbridge with Omar Ortiz, RobinMarie Dessereau, Cindy Bautista and Michelle [inaudible] and we created the first public youth council, elected youth council in Highbridge in the Bronx. And then we had an opportunity to move and become a part of the Bronx Center Plan. And as young people, 18, 19 and 20 years old, envision a school. We got to do that. And then the greatest thing that happened was that school opened, and thanks to my friends at the Urban Assembly, the organization that started the school, New Visions, who we were part of round two of New Visions schools, we opened the Bronx School for Law, Government, and Justice. The school that uniquely sits on a court campus, creating an opportunity for young people. And this was our vision from the beginning, to create the opportunity for young people to learn the inner workings of the court system by being a part of it, but not going through it. And I can tell you that's what we talked about is young people. And so, I look forward to doing that.

And then I just had the opportunity to be a school founder, a teacher and assistant principal, and a principal, and then Chancellor Farina tapped me to become superintendent, and then my dear, great friend and colleague, Chancellor Carranza tapped me to be executive superintendent. And now our Mayor has tapped me to be Chancellor. And so, I am so honored, and this is the great privilege of my life in this – at this moment. You know, as I transitioned as a leader in District 11, the greatest honor that was bestowed upon me was when one of my principals, Principal Erica Tobia, who is now Superintendent Tobia, looked at me and said, 'what I appreciate about you is that you remember what it was to be a principal.' And that's what I promise to do to never forget what it meant to be in a classroom with students and planning lessons and thinking about what was important for them. And especially in this moment for teachers who are grappling with remote classes and in-person classes. I promise to never forget that. For school leaders who are managing so many multiple asks, but centering children first. I'll never forget that. And to our district leaders who are ensuring that supports and resources are being poured to schools every

day, I will never forget. And that's what this moment is about. And at the end of that day – at the end of the day, it's about the tireless dedication we have to every student, every step of the way, it's about early mornings and late nights doing all the work, you'll never see – that no one will ever see you do so that we can show up so that we can create opportunities at school for students to learn each and every day.

But more than anything, it's the endless joy that we saw yesterday in the Bronx when we greeted students at Principal Joe Biernat's school, Leaders of Tomorrow. And they told the Mayor and the Chancellor and I, how excited they were to be back to school, not just because they were in school, but because they wanted to connect with their teachers, they wanted to connect with each other. And that was what – that's what makes this moment so important to me. Primarily, as Chancellor, my job will be to remove the barriers, to direct resources where they're needed most, and communicate clearly around our shared goals and commitments at every school, in every neighborhood, in every single borough. I'm ready to hit the ground running and leave New York City schools to full recovery. It won't be easy, but clearly, I've never done anything easy. But we've come so far since March and Chancellor Carranza and the Mayor have laid an incredible foundation. And the cabinet, at the central office, are ready and raring to go.

I pledge to our students, to young people, I'm indebted to you as a leader, as a teacher, as a principal. And I promise we'll do everything to reopen schools, starting with high schools, we're ready to go. We'll expand the learning opportunities and do more to address trauma and academic needs, because we know that that is very real. And we just heard the heart of our Chancellor as he grapples with his own trauma, because we know it's a real and important thing for us to address. To our families, we'll improve communication and build up trust. I've heard you, I've been in town halls and conferences and Zooms and Zooms and Teams. We will continue to build on investments we've made in your children, our children, because every child deserves a rigorous, high-quality education where they see themselves in the curriculum every single day. And to our staff, to our teachers, our principals, our school aides, our paraprofessionals, our guidance counselors, our kitchen staff, our custodians who've made our buildings shine, our school safety officers who've been at the front lines greeting folks every single day, to every single person who works at the New York City Department of Education, we will listen closely so that we can do the work where we need to do. And that's in our school buildings, in our classrooms with our students. We're going to build-up communities together. And we're going to bring people together to serve students. And to our many, many advocates and community leaders, because what I've said over and over again, this moment is not about what the school system will do alone, but it's about what New York City we'll do together to invest in our children. And so, to our many advocates and community leaders we will partner with you to keep making New York City a better place for all children. I'm ready to get to work. I am so honored, so honored, to serve in this role, and I understand greatly what it means for it to be me. And to all the little girls out there, I'm saving a seat for you. Thank you, Mr. Mayor. Thank you, Chancellor Carranza. Chancellor, hasta luego. We are joined at the heart and at the hip. Mr. Mayor, let's go. Let's do this. I'm ready.

Mayor: Amen. Amen. Thank you so much, Meisha. And congratulations to you and congratulations to your whole family, including – I didn't know that it was your aunt who was your teacher, too, and your mom, obviously, was your teacher. And they should be very proud of this moment of what they nurtured and fostered in you. But again, this is a New York City success story. New York City public schools have produced our new Chancellor. The people of

the Bronx, I know there's particular pride in the Bronx when one of their own moves up to the highest level. So, it is a great day for the Bronx as well. But thank you. I can hear the energy you're ready to bring to this right now, right now. And we're going to need every ounce of it as we continue to bring back our schools.

Okay. We're going to, in a few moments, turn to our colleagues in the media. But as we usually do, I want to spend a moment on a couple of other important matters and especially the ongoing effort to get the supply of vaccine we need. I'm going to say it, I'm going to say it, and I keep saying it – supply, supply, supply. This is what we need. I'm talking to folks in the White House regularly. Our team is constantly talking at the federal level, state level. We're working with colleagues in the Congress to get us more supply. And look, again, even though we have not had the supply we deserve and need, we keep making progress. As of today, from day one, 1,675,556 vaccinations in New York City. That is a very good thing, but we can be doing so much more. Yesterday we set a record, and this is encouraging because it's a sign of what could be, if we were given the supply – 61,971 vaccinations just yesterday. Do the math. I keep saying we could be at half-a-million or more than half-a-million per week if we had the supply. Here's further evidence. We keep building up and building up, let's get the supply we deserve so we can really move this forward and bring this city back strong. Five million people, five million New Yorkers need to be fully vaccinated by June. That's our goal and we can make that goal happen.

Now, while we work to bring our city back, I keep saying a recovery for all of us. That is not just a statement of economics. Yes, we need economic justice, we need a recovery that brings all New Yorkers into that recovery, but we need social and racial justice too. And one of the things that we're seeing, which is particularly troubling, is as we're finally starting to turn the corner, we're seeing an uptick in hatred directed at Asian-American New Yorkers, and this is thoroughly unacceptable, and we will not stand for it. We will fight it. A few days ago, I gathered some leaders of the Asian communities of this city, including Congressman Grace Meng, and the head of the Asian American Federation, Jo-Ann Yoo. And we spoke about hate crimes. We spoke about discrimination, how to fight it in this city. We need everyone to be a part of this, and I know the vast majority of New Yorkers will join us. But even as we're sounding the alarm and calling for people to band together to stop hate, we had a horrible incident yesterday, a horrible act of violence against an Asian-American man out of nowhere, just pure hatred. The suspect has been apprehended, but we're hoping and praying for this man as he fights for his life. What an injustice on every level. This community has been through so much and suffered so much discrimination during the COVID era, continue to see these acts of justice. So, we need to stand up together. We have to stop Asian hate. Tomorrow at one o'clock a Federal Plaza, there's a rally. I'll be there. And I'm encouraging all New Yorkers who can, to support this effort in any and every way, because we have to stop Asian hate. We have to stop these attacks on a community that is part of the heart and soul of New York City. So, please everyone let's stand together. That's what will move us forward.

Okay, let me do the indicators for the day. Number one, daily number of people admitted to New York City hospitals for suspected COVID-19, today's report 280 patients. 63 percent confirmed positivity level, hospitalization rate 4.14 per 100,000. Number two, new reported cases on a seven-day average, today's report 3,183 cases. Number three, percentage of people testing positive citywide for COVID-19, today's report seven-day rolling average, 6.86 percent. Do a few words in Spanish about our new Chancellor.

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

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

Moderator: Hi, all we'll now begin our Q-and-A. With us today is Schools Chancellor Richard Carranza, our new Chancellor Meisha Porter, Health Commissioner Dr. Dave Chokshi, and Senior Advisor Dr. Jay Varma. With that, we'll go to Juliet from 1010 Wins.

Question: Yes, good morning all. And Chancellor Carranza, my sympathies to you. And my congratulations to the new Chancellor, Ms. Porter. So, I actually have a question for both of you. Mr. Carranza, what – you speak very highly of Ms. Porter. What do you think, or how can you advise her on her first order of business?

Chancellor Carranza: Thank you. Thank you for your words. I appreciate that. My advice to Chancellor Porter is, do you, be you, lead with the heart that you've led in every one of the assignments that you've had in New York City, continue to keep the children at the forefront. Remember you serve the children, everyone else should be helping you serve the children, and you should be helping them as they serve children. So, my advice to her is do you and keep doing you. That would be my advice.

Mayor: That is what we call pithy –

[Laughter]

And accurate too. Excellent advice. Go ahead, Juliet. Do we have another question? Can you hear me?

Moderator: Juliet, are you there?

Question: Yes. Can you hear me?

Mayor: Yeah.

Question: Yes. Am I there?

Mayor: Yes. Yes.

Question: Okay. Thank you. And for the new Chancellor, Ms. Porter, you talked about mental health as a component. Where do you want to take that? And in what form do you want to see that in school, helping children?

Incoming Chancellor Porter: So, I'm going to take my Chancellor's advice and I'm going to do me, like he said. But I think it's going to be super important that as we continue our reopenings – and the first thing I'm looking forward to is reopening high school and focusing in on how we reopened schools fully in September. And mental health is at the core of that, supporting the social-emotional needs of our students is at the core of that. And I look forward to doing that

work in the new school year and as we get through these next three month, three to six months of this school year.

Mayor: And I want to emphasize that the work we're going to do on mental health is – takes the foundation that we laid through Thrive NYC with getting mental health support into every school. Remember before this administration, there was not mental health support in every school. When we created community schools, hundreds of community schools, we had mental health professionals in every school, assigned to every school. We made sure every other school had access, had training in mental health, access to mental health professionals. We added to that earlier this year, including access to what Health + Hospitals can provide in terms of mental health support, therapeutic support, etcetera. And then we said, let's build this all out with – on top of the work, the social-emotional learning announcement we made, Chancellor, a couple of years ago now putting social-emotional learning throughout all of the school system, let's build it out with mental health screening of every child in September with additional social workers. That's something we really want to focus on. One of the things that's most important. And I hope to see in the new stimulus, is support for education. Well, that includes mental health support, more and more mental health professionals and social workers in our schools. So, we have a lot of building blocks here that are all going to come together for September.

Moderator: Next, we'll go to James from PIX-11.

Question: Hey, good morning. Happy Friday to everyone on the call. Thanks for taking my call.

Mayor: Happy Friday, James. How you doing today?

Question: You know what, really well, thank you. It's a beautiful day in New York. Every day is a beautiful day, but particularly today, it's lovely. Thank you. A question I guess, for the new Chancellor and for the Mayor – certainly segregation in schools has been a major issue throughout your tenure, Mayor, and look throughout the recent history of New York City. What are we looking at going forward with this superintendent, this – I'm sorry, this Chancellor, who is herself, a person of color from New York City schools? How can that help and what is the course that you want to take to try to address this pervasive problem?

Mayor: Thank you for the question. I'll start and then I'll turn to Meisha. I think it's fair to say, as someone who's experienced the life of our public schools from childhood and as a professional as well is going to help us take the next step in diversifying our classrooms and overcoming the barriers of the past. We made major announcements in the last few months, we are changing screened schools, and more is coming. We are changing the approach to gifted and talented, and more is coming, a brand new approach that will be announced in September. Even though I think the coming months may not be the moment when this happens, I do believe with this new moment of opportunity to re-examine the questions again, the day will come in Albany when we come up with a new plan to change the specialized high schools, something that Chancellor and I fought for because that status quo in specialized high schools represents to me the worst of the past. And it does not represent our city. We have been moving on all these fronts and we're going to be doing a lot more in the course of this year. I think our whole society, I think, whether it's local government or state government, people are more and more ready for these changes and we're going to make these changes. So, I think it is a moment for profound change. And I know

Meisha Ross Porter knows both the academic reality of how we bring fairness and opportunity to kids and the question of how we create justice in our society. She knows how to blend those two together because she's been doing it in her work every day for 20 years, going back, even to when she was a youth organizer creating a high school. I mean think about that, young people deciding there needed to be a school that really represented them and would uplift them and then make it happen. That's the caliber of our new Chancellor. Chancellor, do you want to add?

Incoming Chancellor Porter: Absolutely. You know, as superintendent of District 11, I worked to ensure that we had an open middle school admissions process. So, I believe in ensuring there's opportunity and access. And I think the Mayor and the Chancellor have already begun to make great [inaudible] in this area. The reality is, you know, segregation exists and I'm not going to shy away from the importance of really looking at the inequities around admissions processes and really pushing forward for ways we can create opportunities and access for all students across New York City.

Mayor: Amen. Go ahead, James.

Question: Switching gears, we have reports of wait times of up to five hours at the Citi Field vaccination site, and similar wait times at the Bathgate site in the Bronx. What's being done to shorten those wait times and what guarantees can you give to people that they won't have to stand in the cold, especially in overnight periods of time for lengthy periods of time like this?

Mayor: You know, James, I thank you for bringing this forward. Again, I'm going to always make it a point to thank journalists who alert us to a problem. Sometimes when I hear there's concern about wait times, I want to emphasize there's a problem that needs to be fixed at a center. And it's been rare. Really the good news is most of these centers, most of the vaccination centers have been moving pretty smoothly, but sometimes there's a problem at a center we have to address immediately. I'm going to today, right after this, look at what's happening at Citi Field and Bathgate. Other times I want to caution, James, folks are getting there very early out of an abundance of caution, even though they have an assigned scheduled time for vaccination, and that time overwhelmingly is when it happens. So, I got to find out exactly what's happening here. Dr. Chokshi, I don't know if you have any specific report on these sites, but obviously as I turned to Dr. Chokshi, I'll say, James, not acceptable that anyone will wait that long even if it weren't cold weather, especially not in the cold weather. So, whatever needs to be done, we're going to fix that. These are very big, effective sites. I've seen them both in action. We will make sure those wait times are addressed. Dr. Chokshi, do you want to add anything?

Commissioner Dave Chokshi, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene: All right, thank you, sir. And as you said, we will follow up with our colleagues, of course, who are operating those sites. I do know that they've expanded capacity significantly with respect to the number of appointments over the last few days because of the supply that we have been able to get. And in the last 48 hours, I know they have increased staff concomitantly to try to address some of these wait times. So, we will follow up on all of those things.

Mayor: I'm going to connect what Dr. Chokshi said to our education theme today because he had an SAT word there, concomitantly. Concomitantly. That's not what I – we allowed a whole lot, not sure I'll ever – we'll get through it. So, I don't try. Okay. Who's next.

Moderator: Next, we'll go to Madina from Politico.

Question: Can you hear me?

Mayor: Yeah, we need a little more volume though, Medina. Can you hear us?

Question: Yeah, I can hear you.

Mayor: There you go.

Question: Great. It's been a while.

Mayor: How are you doing?

Question: I'm good. I'm good. Big news today. Yeah, so my first question is for Chancellor Carranza. So, the New York Times has reported on some tensions between you and the Mayor over desegregation, particularly this issue of the gifted and talented test, some disagreements over that. I was wondering if you could comment on that.

Chancellor Carranza: Hi, Madina. So, I haven't read the story, but let me just say, when I came to New York City three years ago, it was because I believed that this Mayor believes in equity and believes in tearing down systems that oppress anyone, and the evidence that I looked at was 3-K, Pre-K for all, AP for all, Computer Science for All, and the Equity and Excellence agenda for me was the real calling card of being able to come and join that work that had started and hopefully add my shoulder to the wheel and make it real for our students in our community. Policy is never made in a perfect four-corner box where everybody automatically says, yes, this is a piece of cake and I'm going to love it, and I think what I have appreciated about this mayor is that he has allowed all of us at the table to have differing views and to argue those views and to advocate those views and come to a consensus. So, I am proud of the work that we've done together, and I wish this Mayor and the new Chancellor continued work in this regard.

Mayor: Go ahead, Madina.

Question: Yeah, and secondly where are you going next and why are you leaving with only 10 months left in this in the year?

Chancellor Carranza: Yeah, Madina, there's never a perfect time. I'm very proud of the fact that we've been able to – of the 10 largest school systems in America, New York City, the largest, has been able to open schools for in-person learning and keep our students and those who serve our students extraordinarily safe, and just yesterday we opened middle schools, and if I may say so flawlessly. So, I think, and we have as our new Chancellor has said, we have a working plan, that's being finalized around opening our high schools. So, there's never a perfect time, and at times you have to do what's personally necessary for you. So, I'm going to take time to grieve, to reconnect with my family, and I don't know what I'm going to do next, but I'm a man of God and I'm a man of faith and I know that the Lord will light a path and I'm faithful to walk that path.

Mayor: Beautiful. Thank you, Chancellor. Go ahead.

Moderator: Next, we'll go to Andrew from WNBC.

Question: Hey, good morning, Mr. Mayor, and the current Chancellor and the incoming Chancellor. Mayor, I'm wondering your take, hearing the Chancellor, the outgoing Chancellor's pretty raw description of the grief that he's endured and the need for a mental health break. If, let's be honest, highly compensated Chancellor is feeling that, what do you think the parents, the students, the teachers and others are going through one year into this pandemic?

Mayor: I think they're going through hell, Andrew. I think this – the mental health toll here is inestimable and it's not getting the attention it deserves. We are saying very clearly, and we're not mincing words. I've said many times sitting right here, our children have been through trauma. That's just exactly the word we have to use, but also their parents have been through trauma. I've spent a lot of time with New Yorkers who have lost family members. I remember very vividly some of my visits to public housing for example. People coming up to me. I remember being at Queensbridge Houses, early on, early – people already telling me and showing me pictures of the grandma they lost, or the aunt or uncle they lost, and talking about that. I went to Brown Memorial Church in Brooklyn, and that church lost so many members of their church community, including so many of their deacons, their elders, and people were just experiencing wave after wave of pain.

This is going to carry on with us. It's going to be a challenge we have to overcome. So, this is why, and I'll say it strongly. When years and years ago, we decided to invest in our public health system, in Health + Hospitals to save it. Years and years ago, we said we needed guaranteed health care so that everyone in the city will get health care, regardless of ability to pay, regardless of documentation status, and years and years ago, we said Thrive NYC would guarantee all New Yorkers access to mental health services. This is why we're adamant this is needed more than ever. The one thing – there's one thing we need to invest more in in our society – it's mental health because this society has never got it right on mental health, and we've tried to shine a light on that for years, but this is a more clear, painful, powerful example than we've ever had. We must, we must invest and focus on mental health. So, our kids, our families have been through hell, which is why when we come back in September, every single child, we're going to check in with and find out how they're doing. If they need a little bit of help, we'll get them that. If they need therapy, if they need extensive help, Health + Hospitals is going to be there for them for free to give them the help they need. Our educators – Chirlane talks about this all the time about don't forget, we have to help the helpers – our educators have been through so much, and they, you know, they've struggled with what's happened in their own families and also trying to support kids and knowing what pain kids have been through. Our educators need mental health support too. So, this is what we need to talk about more. This is what we need to invest in more. Go ahead, Andrew.

Question: And a question for the incoming Chancellor, Ms. Porter, I'm just wondering what is your assessment of how remote learning has gone during this pandemic?

Incoming Chancellor Porter: So, you know remote learning has been the thing that we had to shift into and the thing that the Mayor and the Chancellor shifted into very quickly getting, devices in the hands of young people getting resources and support to teachers, to engage in the practice of remote learning. But I'll have to say as a mother who has a young person, a 10th

grader engaging in remote learning at home every day, and as the mother of a college graduate, who didn't get to finish her last semester, nothing, absolutely nothing replaces the interaction between a teacher and a student in a classroom, and that's what I'm looking forward to making sure happens. But also, really leveraging the resources that we've been able to get in the hands of our young people and our schools, and so students having access to technology and the adults really knowing how to use and leverage that technology to support learning.

Mayor: Right, and I'll just add really quickly. This is - you know, we've been through a horrible crisis, we've been through a lot of pain, but something has come of it that will have some lasting positive, which is we've learned how to do digital learning a lot better, and all these kids have the devices. The educators have learned how to use digital learning. It's going to allow us to individualize instruction in a way that wasn't possible before. So, there's the opportunity we need to grab and act on. Go ahead.

Moderator: Next is Brigid from WNYC.

Question: Morning, everybody. My first question is for Chancellor Carranza, and I just want echo some of what my colleagues have expressed in terms of condolences for what you've experienced. As you've talked about your own grieving and needing time to recover, I'm wondering if you can also talk about some of the specific things that you think need to happen for the school system as a whole to heal in a fundamental way?

Chancellor Carranza: Thank you, Brigid. I appreciate your sentiments. I think we've laid out what has to happen for our school system and our city, quite frankly, to continue to not only recover, but come back strong, and that includes making sure that we have social-emotional supports, and the resources, and the training, and the materials that teachers can use to support our students. I think it's also very, very important that we, as New Yorkers continue to follow the medical advice that our medical experts have given to us, that our Health Commissioner has, has spoken about because as New York writ-large gets healthier and gets more immune, it makes it possible for us in the schools to continue to have in-person learning and add more and more students to in-person learning as well.

I also think it's important – look, one of the things I love about New York is that you tell it like it is, and I'm just going to tell it like it is, we have to have patience, and we also have to have flexibility as we go forward, because at every single point during this pandemic, the facts have changed or the facts have evolved, or what was true two weeks ago or two months ago, mutates, and we have to be able to adapt to those changes. So, flexibility and patience is important, but it's also important that, you know, I think from this point forward, the new post-pandemic normal will never look like the pre-pandemic normal, and part of this new normal is going to include social-emotional supports, trauma-informed curriculum, trauma-informed pedagogy, concomitant with the academic supports that we know are so important for our students to make up this COVID opportunity gap, that's been thrust upon us.

Mayor: You have used concomitant correctly in the sentence. If this were spelling bee, you'd be doing well. Thank you. Go ahead, Brigid.

Question: Thanks for the SAT word, Chancellor. And then for Chancellor Porter, you talked about being ready to open high schools. Can you talk some more about that and explain what your thoughts are there?

Incoming Chancellor Porter: So, my initial thoughts are first getting the doors open, but second creating those healing spaces for students to learn in-building, and we're looking forward to getting the doors open, getting the doors open for our students, supporting our educators and all of the ways that they need to show up for young people, but also leaning into what the Chancellor talked about, and that is really leaning into what our new normal at school looks like. Leveraging technology, engaging in social-emotional learning supports, acknowledging the trauma that our communities have faced, and ensuring that our school communities hold all of those things as a part of their requirements for serving our students and families.

Mayor: Go ahead.

Moderator: Next is Steve from WCBS Radio.

Question: Hi, good morning, everybody. Appreciate you taking my question. Of course, congratulations to the incoming Chancellor and, and best wishes and our condolences to the outgoing Chancellor. First, I wanted to ask the incoming Chancellor – when we talk about creating this new normal, it has to be a somewhat daunting kind of task ahead to look at what we could be facing in September, in terms of students coming back. They're going to be in all different spaces in terms of what they've learned, what their retention is, and of course, the trauma that so many have experienced. So, the new Chancellor, when you look at creating this new normal, I mean, what is your mindset going into this?

Incoming Chancellor Porter: So, you see daunting. Me, I see possibilities. You know, I see so many opportunities to leverage the work that has started to really move our school system forward, and we've been talking in, in education and across the country for years about what it means to live and be a 21st Century learner, and now we have the opportunity to do that. So, I see potential and possibilities for what will come in the next school year, and to put in place and ensure the things that should have always been in place in our schools. When I was a principal, I had a full-time social worker, and that was something that I acknowledged was a need in our building, and we need to make sure that every school has the resources to support trauma, social-emotional learning needs, that our curriculum rep is representative of the communities that they serve and that our students, all students see underrepresented populations in their curriculum. And so, I'm looking forward to potential and possibilities of what our new normal would look like.

Mayor: Go ahead, Steve.

Question: Appreciate that, thank you. And to the outgoing Chancellor, I know you were asked earlier if you have any advice for the incoming Chancellor, I wanted to try and take a kind of different angle on that question. What have you learned in the past three years that you wish you knew as you came in terms of, you know, New York's education industry? About how parents operate? About how teachers operate? What have you learned in the time you've been here that you wish you knew when you started?

Chancellor Carranza: Steve, that's a great question. I think – honestly speaking – I think that the challenge and the opportunities that we've had in New York City are very similar to the challenges and opportunities that I've experienced in the other four systems that I've worked in and led, but they're bigger and they're more complex in New York City, and one of the I think the attributes and one of the reasons why Chancellor Porter is such a good choice is because she's grown up in New York City. She knows the streets. She knows the boroughs. She knows the what the – not only the challenges are, but more importantly, what the opportunities are. So, I think she's going to have a running start at really tackling all of those opportunities in a very grounded, realistic way. I would also add though that one of the things that I appreciate and I will forever carry with me about New York is just the honest, sincere, passionate advocacy of our parents, our communities, our advocates, our elected officials, when they advocate for their point of view, and I'm going to appreciate that because you never – there was never a gray area, and I appreciate that, and I didn't know that coming in, but I've sure come to appreciate that, and embrace that even if it hasn't been my particular point of view. For me, that's what makes New York, New York, the greatest city in the world.

Mayor: I agree with that statement, Chancellor. Who's next?

Moderator: We have time for two more. First, we'll go to Emma from the New York Times.

Question: Hi, good morning. I'm going to say the same thing, I'm very sorry for your losses, Chancellor Carranza. And I had a question for you, my colleague Eliza's story is up, I know you haven't read it yet, but should we view this – the fact that you're leaving before the school year ends, abruptly, should we view this as you're leaving in protest after just having disagreements with the Mayor?

Chancellor Carranza: I thank you for your sentiments as well. I truly appreciate it. Look, I'm leaving because I need to take care of me and I need time to grieve, and this city, this school system deserves a Chancellor who 100 percent is taking up the helm and leading the charge to bringing everybody back in September, and I'm proud, and I'm incredibly honored that I've had the opportunity to do that to this point, but at some point you have to heal your own heart if you can share your heart with others. So, that's what this is about, and there's never a perfect time, but I'm extremely proud that we are at a point where we can make that handoff and I have no doubt that our new Chancellor will take us to the finish line.

Mayor: Thank you. Go ahead, Emma.

Question: And the question for the new Chancellor, can you talk about sort of your views on integration? Do you have similar views to Chancellor Carranza and what's one thing you would want to achieve on that front in the next 10 months?

Incoming Chancellor Porter: You know, I want to build on the work around integration and I would say over the next 10 months, I want to really, really, really dig into G and T, I think that is top of mind and top priority, and that is where my first focus will be as it relates to integration.

Mayor: Yeah, and I want to amplify, Emma, we said to the parents in New York City, G & T as we know it is going away. This is the last time that there'll be the process in any way like the one that people have known before, this is the last time G and T will be structured as it was before.

What – let me amplify this for a moment because I had this conversation with the current Chancellor and the new Chancellor. There's a hell of a lot more gifted and talented kids than the current approach captures. The entire concept of saying, you know, if a typical kindergarten class is something like 65,000 kids that only 2,500 somehow are gifted and talented is preposterous. We need to show the people of this city something better.

Now, the challenge has been over the years and I want to be clear, we focused on a lot of things. We focused on Pre-K for All, 3- K for All, AP for All, Computer Science for All, you know, intense training of our teachers' professional development, so many things even before you get to what we had to do during the pandemic. Gifted and talented we did not find a better solution for, and it is a true statement that in this crisis, seeing the power of digital learning opened up a doorway to a new approach to gifted and talented. So, none of us honestly have been satisfied with the status quo on gifted and talented, but we needed something different to replace it and we finally now see the outlines of what that looks like. In September with leadership of our new Chancellor, we will present a very different approach to gift and talented that will be much more inclusive, that will reach many more children, that will not create the kind of separation that we've seen in schools, and in fact, will take digital learning among other tools to help children learn who are ready to learn an accelerated manner, whether it's in one subject, in multiple subjects, we'll be able to do that now in a whole new way. So gifted and talented as we have known it is gone in September. You're going to see an entirely new approach, which I will be better educationally for our kids and also for ending segregation and improving diversity in our classrooms. Go ahead.

Moderator: For our last question, we'll go to Reema from Chalkbeat.

Question: Hi everyone. Chancellor Carranza, I just want to echo what everyone else has already said. I'm so sorry to hear about the loss of your family and friends and I just wanted to say that to you. So, first question for you, Chancellor Carranza, were there things that you would have, or could have done differently, perhaps things that were hard to push through with City Hall and with the Mayor involved and if so, what were some of those things if you can share examples?

Chancellor Carranza: Reema, thank you for your sentiments. I do appreciate it. I'm going to miss seeing you at events. You know, it's never been my style to look at the what shoulda, coulda, woulda. I think that we challenged ourselves and we took on the tough fights because we saw them as things that were just part of what we needed to do to serve children and communities in New York City. If I could have done anything different, I would have probably engaged much more in really having more conversations with communities so that the work that we were trying to accomplish wasn't usurped and made to feel like we were attacking communities. That's never been my intent. That's never been this Mayor's intent. That's not what we've tried to do and the way to do that is through more engagement and more community-based engagement. So, I would have done more of that. But one thing that I'm satisfied with is that every day when I get up and look in the mirror, I'm satisfied that I've never hit who I am, and I've never been shy about articulating where I'm coming from. And for me, look, I wasn't born a Chancellor, I'm obviously not going to die a Chancellor, but I'm always going to have to look at that mirror, and I'm proud to say that I have no regrets when I look in the mirror.

Mayor: Amen. Go ahead, Reema.

Question: Okay. My second question is for our new Chancellor, welcome and congratulations on the post. We still know that there is a lot of trepidation or loss of trust among school leaders and teachers and families especially those who are looking to return to building. So, I'm wondering, you know, how do you, is this something that you're prioritizing in terms of restoring trust and then how do you plan to rebuild that trust and persuade families to – might be reluctant even in the fall [inaudible] to come back to buildings?

Incoming Chancellor Porter: Well, it sounds like I got an initial marching order from Chancellor's Carranza's comments around what he would do going back, and I look forward to engaging with community members, and that is our families, that is our students, that is our teachers, our educators, but also our elected official colleagues, community-based organizations, and non-profit and for-profit partners who want to join to really make sure that we open 21st century schools. And so, I look forward to really engaging in conversations about what reopening will look like and how we want to, you know, enter out our new school year together.

Mayor: And let me just add to that and conclude today, I think that's a great comment by our new chancellor because we are all in this together. I mean, this is about bringing back the biggest school system in the country, bringing it back fully, and I'm going to emphasize in that word, fully, in September. I'm absolutely convinced we can do it, but it will take listening to people. It will take answering questions and real concerns. People are afraid. Of course, we've been through a pandemic, a global crisis. The fear is understandable. We got meet it, we got to answer the concerns. We got to show people that we can make things work. Look, we have achieved something amazing, and thank you, Chancellor Carranza, because it never would have been possible but for your leadership. We brought back the biggest school system in America when folks said it couldn't be done. And then the big question was would it be safe? He put together the gold standard of health and safety measures, improved every single day that our New York City public schools are safe. A lot of people are seeing that teachers, staff, parents, kids, and gaining confidence, and we got to keep earning that confidence, but we're now going to have, you know, the greatest, most powerful tool, which is vaccination. We've got five million people vaccinated by June. It's going be a whole new ball game by the time we get to September.

So, today we celebrate what the New York City public schools have achieved. We thank Chancellor Carranza for all he has contributed to this city. Yes, you may not have been born here, you may not have been lucky enough to have been born here, but you became a New Yorker, next best thing, and you are now etched in the history of New York City in a very noble way for all you have done for us. And we pass the torch to someone born, bred, went to our public schools, came up as a teacher in a public school, this is for every teacher out there, for every educator, one of your own going all the way at the top. For every kid in New York City public schools, you can dream of being Chancellor because guess what? The new Chancellor traveled that same path. It is a day celebrate what is possible in New York City because the answer is everything and anything is possible in New York City. That's what makes us great. Thank you, everyone.

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