

THE CITY OF NEW YORK  
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR  
NEW YORK, NY 10007

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** October 1, 2020, 10:00 AM

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

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

**Mayor Bill de Blasio:** Well, good morning, everybody. And this morning, congratulations are in order. As the principal of the One World Middle School said to all of us in the Bronx this morning – we did it. We did it. You did it. New York City did it. This is an absolutely amazing moment, fighting back this pandemic. And this morning, 1,600 New York City public schools opened, kids coming to school for the first time since March. And it was a joyous moment in the Bronx this morning, the energy was amazing. The kids, ready to be back in school with their teachers they love, with their friends, parents so happy to see their kids back in school. So, relieved. The teachers, the educators, the staff, incredible joy at seeing kids again, at being ready to be there to help our kids move forward. We did it, New York City, and everyone should be proud of this moment. This is an example of what makes New York City great. We did something that other cities around this country could only dream of because we have fought back this pandemic so well for so long, because we had the will and the focus to bring back our public schools for the good of our kids, our families, and all of New York City. This is a key moment in our rebirth. And a lot of people said it couldn't be done and it was tough, but we did it and we did it together. So, congratulations to everyone.

This morning, amazing Principal Patricia Wynn, who founded the school 10 years ago, she said she was up at 3:00 AM because she was so excited and so happy to welcome kids back. And she kept telling everyone they should be proud of what they achieved by getting us to this day. And then as I was leaving the school, she turned to me very purposely, and she said, thank you, now keep us open, please. And that is the crucial message that I want everyone to focus on, that we're going to work every single day to take this achievement and build on it, to make our schools better all the time, to keep strengthening everything we're doing for our kids and families, and to stay open all the way through. That is the mission. We've got a lot to do. And we have to constantly work at addressing the health challenges around us, but we have achieved something remarkable today and now we will build upon it. And I want to tell you, a beautiful moment with the young woman who is an ambassador, they call them ambassadors of the school, each grade has a group of ambassadors who greet visitors coming to the school. A young woman named Farhana, an eighth grade ambassador, she greeted me, she had a little speech she gave about what the first day of school meant to her and her classmates. And the most important thing she said to me is, we are so excited to be here together again. That is the spirit of what we're seeing this morning in schools all over New York City.

Now, as I said, 1,600 public schools open, over 1,000 community-based pre-K and 3-K sites open, all receiving kids today. In the course this week, as many as half-a-million kids will go through the door of a New York City public school program. And that is something that speaks

volumes. And I want to turn to the Chancellor now and say, this victory was won on the ground in every single school and every single pre-K and 3-K center by the educators, by the staff who were working all summer to make this happen, by the parents and the students who kept the faith. But I want to thank the Chancellor and your whole team – and we've spent a lot of time together the last few weeks at the war room at the Tweed Courthouse headquarters of the Department of Education. And I will tell you, the Chancellor and his team have not gotten a lot of sleep these last weeks. They – if you send them an email at midnight, you get a response at midnight, you send them an email at seven in the morning, you get a response at seven in the morning. They have been on it seven days a week. And this achievement is something you, Chancellor, and your whole team should be very proud of. We've got a long way to go and a lot more to do, but this is a crucial moment. Chancellor, please give us an update on what you're seeing today and where we're going.

**Schools Chancellor Richard Carranza:** Thank you, Mr. Mayor, and good morning, everybody. Happy first day of school, times three. So, we have a lot to celebrate today. As the Mayor said, congratulations to our teachers, our principals, paras, school nutrition workers, school safety agents, and most assuredly our school custodians who have done everything in their power to make sure that schools are open safely and securely and with good sanitation and safety protocols. As of this morning, schools in every grade have opened their doors for children across the city. There's magic that happens in a classroom when you see an adult in the classroom with children, and it's been so uplifting. It's all worth it, all the sleepless nights are worth it. Classrooms and school buildings are buzzing again. And for the first time since March, students are in those schools eager to learn, and dedicated educators are ready to teach. This is a monumental milestone for our city. I want to thank everybody. And I've just mentioned everybody that I want to thank, but I want to thank parents as well, because you have made it possible for us to reach this point. I also want to thank the incredible and tireless staff in our schools and our central and borough offices who have worked literally night and day throughout the summer, and some of whom stepped up and out of their traditional day to day roles to support schools at this moment. Many of them are in schools today, supporting schools and making sure they have the adults necessary to make sure students have a good experience. This wasn't easy, no one knew the challenges that this disease would bring and the grief and sadness that we've all had to grapple with. But finally, our students, despite so many challenges and obstacles, proved that they can persevere and take learning to new heights.

I also want to thank my fellow New Yorkers. We are the only major school district in the entire country to safely reopen our schools for in-person learning. Now think about that for a minute. The largest, most complex school system in America is the only one that has opened their doors for in-person learning. This is a testament to my fellow New Yorkers and following the medical advice to make it possible for us to do this. I want to emphasize how crucial physically being in school is for our families. I've shared before the stories of children and some of whom haven't had a stable environment at home but have that in their school homes. This is critically important, especially for our most vulnerable children. A school community is sometimes the steadiest part of their lives and we have the people and the resources that they can rely on. These were the children that the Mayor and I were constantly thinking about while school buildings were closed. And I know that our educators and administrators were too. They've told me about their stories and what they hoped for their children. Seeing the faces of our children light up

when they're reunited with their peers and their teachers and the principal, was a joyous experience that should serve as a reminder to all of us why this past week has been so important and why our hard work has been worth it.

As I said earlier this week, despite all that's new about this school year, one thing never changes, the health and safety of our students and staff and the academic excellence for every student remain our highest priority. It's not going to be perfect right at the beginning, but we will continue to perfect and get better and build capacity as we go. Day one will not look like week one, will not look like month one or first semester. We're going to continue to get better. Our custodial staff has never been busier and our educators in the classrooms had been trained to enforce the strictest health and safety protocols. And I'm glad to report that in every school that I have visited this week – I have unannounced visits – I have seen students with their masks fully on, nose, mouth, full face, and keeping them on. And I've seen educators educate students as to why it's important and reminding them that this is what they do to not only protect themselves but protect their fellow friends and humans in the classroom. We're keeping a very close eye on our indicators and won't hesitate to take quick action where necessary.

So, I want to end my remarks this morning with a message of gratitude. This was and is a colossal undertaking and it wouldn't be possible without every single staff member, every family, and all New Yorkers. As our principal, Principal Wynn, asked us today and asked the Mayor, implored the Mayor, keep us open. We can only do that with your continued cooperation and help. We wouldn't be here today without you and I want to say once again, thank you. And for the last time this school year, happy first day,

**Mayor:** It's even better the third time, right Richard? Everyone, I want to note quickly – Richard made a point – it's been amazing seeing the consistency with which the students are wearing masks. Obviously, the teachers and staff as well. And the students this morning, I was watching as they were going in the door, at the One World Middle School and having a mask that just seemed natural to them at this point, getting the temperature check, just doing the elbow bumping. Kids are so adaptable, and it's been amazing to see how they've gone with it, because what they cared about was getting in the door, seeing their teachers, seeing their friends, feeling a little bit more like life was getting back to normal, the energy of being in school. And a lot of the kids said that they were tired of being cooped up at home. They wanted to get away from a screen. They wanted to see actual friends and teachers and human beings. And it makes all the difference in the world. And the energy of the teachers is astounding. And it communicates immediately to the students how important they are, how valuable they are, how much potential they have. That's why, among so many other reasons, it was so important to get our kids back in school. But yes, congratulations to everyone. Special shout out to everyone at School Facilities and School Construction Authority, all the folks who've done amazing work to make sure the PPE were there. All the custodial teams in the schools who are doing great work, keeping the schools clean and ready. A Herculean effort, but you can see across the system, it is working. Thank you to the school bus drivers. Thank you to the school safety agents, to the crossing guards, to the folks that work in food services. Everyone is contributing to this amazing victory today. And our educators, thank you for sticking with it and thank you for the joy and the passion you bring to this work.

So, now let's get on with moving forward. And one of the things we need to do to move forward is make sure that we have rigorous and consistent testing for the coronavirus in our schools every month. So, a reminder to all parents, please fill out the forms authorizing the tests at the school for your kids on a monthly basis. This is going to allow us to keep a constant eye on what's happening at each school and make sure we can keep everyone safe. So, we need all families involved. If you have any questions you can talk to the school and we will get you the answers you need in whatever language you need it in. But those consent forms have been sent home. We are going to start testing next week. And again, a reminder to parents, and I'm saying this as a parent, there's going to be real questions understandably. Is it free? Yes, it's free. Is it quick and easy for your child? Yes, it will be at the school building or right near the school building. Is it going to be that long instrument that goes up your nose? No, it's the new version. That's basically like the equivalent of a QTIP going around your nostril. It's simple. It is not invasive. It's quick. It takes literally seconds. And then your child goes on their way. You get the results for your child and we all get to know what's going on and make sure we're moving forward safely. So, please, parent, fill out those forms. Let's get them back right away.

Okay, now that's tremendous good news. And it's the most important news of the day, but we also have to obviously deal with the challenges we're facing now in 10 ZIP codes around the city. And these are real challenges and we're taking them head on, we'll go over the indicators and what's happening on the ground in these communities. Ten ZIP codes, where we have a clear problem. We have a group of other ZIP codes where we have concern, again against the backdrop of 146 ZIP codes total in the city and overwhelmingly the rest of the city is doing very, very well and the numbers show it, but we've got real work to do so let's go over these indicators. First, number one, daily number of people admitted to New York City hospitals for suspected COVID-19, that threshold is 200 patients, today's report is 75 patients with a confirmed positive rate for COVID of 22 percent. Number two, new reported cases on a seven-day average, threshold is 550 cases, today's report is 394. Number three, percentage of people testing positive for COVID-19, threshold is five percent, today's report is 1.59 percent for the day. But again, now we're also talking about the seven-day rolling average, which is even more crucial. 1.52 percent for the seven-day rolling average.

Now, everyone, what we need to do again is a number of measures we're going to act on in the communities most affected, but the message to people in those communities, the message to all New Yorkers is, get tested. We need the best possible look at what is happening in every part of New York City. We know we got this far by people going out and getting tested. And by being quick to act when we saw a problem, as we had some weeks ago in Sunset Park in Brooklyn and Soundview in the Bronx, anytime we've seen on the issue, we go at it, attack it, address it, and turn it around, but it all keys in on the need for people to get tested. So, if you have not gotten tested lately or never gotten tested, please, wherever you live in New York City, get tested today. Fast, easy, free. If you live in one of these affected ZIP codes, imperative – if you haven't been tested, go get tested. It will help us understand exactly what's going on and how to address it. So, let's talk about the clusters we're seeing in Brooklyn and Queens – largely Southern Brooklyn, Central Queens, and obviously part of the Rockaways, Far Rockaway area. These are the areas where the positivity rate above three percent. Yesterday, another ZIP code, Fresh Meadows, Hillcrest surpassed three percent in Queens. So, we're now at 10 ZIP codes. We have been watching carefully, some other ZIP codes – Williamsburg in Brooklyn, had been low. We have

seen an increase, but not yet over three percent. We're watching that carefully, a lot of action on the ground in Williamsburg to address that.

So, we all have to buckle down at this point in those 10 ZIP codes and go hard at this challenge. Now we have six others we're monitoring carefully because we've seen some increases – Crown Heights, Bedford-Stuyvesant, Clinton Hill, Fort Greene, these are all Brooklyn now, Kensington and Windsor Terrace, Brighton Beach, Manhattan Beach, Sheepshead Bay. And then in Queens, Rego Park and Hillcrest, Jamaica Estates, Jamaica Hills. These ZIP codes, we're keeping a close eye on and sending more support into, but again, the same message for people who live in these ZIP codes, go out and get tested right away. Obviously, follow all the basics, the face mask, the social distancing. We need that. Now on the ground in the 10 ZIP codes right now, 1,000 City personnel who have been out there doing education efforts, free masks distribution, inspections, a huge amount of masks distributed, schools were visited, nonpublic schools were visited, businesses were inspected – 130 warnings issued yesterday, 16 violations. So, again, the warnings, if not heeded, lead to violations and can also lead to the closure of a school or business. But we are seeing, thankfully, overwhelmingly, a growth in compliance. We're seeing more and more masks usage. We're seeing more and more adherence to the rules, but still not enough so we have to keep pushing further. And you will see these thousand City personnel out again today aggressively. And it's going to be very, very clear, every opportunity has been given for people to follow the rules as they've been laid out, anyone not following them now, subject to fine, any business, not following now, subject to closure. This is what you'll see more and more today and tomorrow as we continue to deepen these efforts.

I think by now, it is clear for anyone who was resting on the assumption there was herd immunity, there has not been herd immunity in New York City. We have to treat this seriously. We have to address it. Now that being said, we have something very positive. In addition to the fact that more and more people clearly are adhering to the rules, much more mask usage over the last few days, and we see it increasing all the time, for example. Testing expansion is also key. The mobile units, the mobile – the popup testing areas we talked about yesterday, the testing machines being brought into the community and given to neighborhood health providers, now well over a thousand new tests per day being provided. We're going to know a lot more in the next 24 hours from all of that. But the testing levels, the capacity for testing in the community will be growing greatly over the next few days. It is imperative that community leaders, community institutions, and everyday New Yorkers heed the call and go out and get tested and send the message of how important it is to get tested.

With that, I want to turn to Dr. Katz, who's been leading the way and working so closely with community leaders and, again, emphasizing how much support and cooperation he's gotten from community leaders in getting these messages out. And Dr. Katz will now update us on this expanded outreach and testing effort – Dr. Katz.

**President and CEO Mitchell Katz, NYC Health + Hospitals:** Thanks, Mr. Mayor. And as you say, we've been incredibly happy with the changes we've seen in behavior. A major, major increase in the number of people wearing masks. And I want to thank the community for hearing our plea and for responding so responsibly. We still have some work to do. Usage is not yet where we need it to be. And people have to remember to include their full mouth and nose in



their mask the way our children do. As the Chancellor was saying, our children can do it. We can all make sure that we have our masks on correctly. I do want to remind people that masks are needed both outdoors and indoors, especially in places of business. So many stores in our city, our small stores, there's not a lot of room. It's important that people have the masks so that we don't infect each other, or the people who work there. Wear a mask when shopping for groceries, at the department store or picking up take-out. It protects the workers and other customers.

This Friday begins the celebration of Sukkot. It's a very important holiday in my tradition. It's a time when, typically, we want to spend with both our family and other families. Fortunately, the sukkah itself is typically outside. There's no roof because part of the celebration is being able to be directly under the stars, but it's very important that if families are coming together to enjoy being in the sukkah, that they are not huddled in one part of the sukkah together. When my family of four eats with other families, it's always outside and it's the four of us on one end, a big space and the other family at the other end. And it does not prevent us from having a great time. It's good to be near the people who are part of your own pod, but it's good to keep a distance from people who are not part of your own family. We can still enjoy each other's company. We can still tell stories together. We can listen to music. We don't have to be all in one spot. We can wear a mask whenever we're not eating. If we do those things, we'll be able to still enjoy our festival without risk of infecting anyone.

Our teams are out there distributing masks, palm cards, and sanitizers. You'll find them in the Borough Park Library and Fort Hamilton, out in the Rockaways. And several other places. Our 11 mobile testing sites have been busy, continue to test hundreds of New Yorkers every day. We started our first block party yesterday, and I expect it to get busier as the neighborhood learns about it. At full capacity, we'll be able to test 500 people a day. And when all six sites are up and running, we'll be able to test 3,000 people a day. I thank all the community groups who are working with us that are distributing face coverings and giving people the necessary literature. We know that neighbors and peers are credible managers messengers and we are grateful for their help in spreading the word to community members. We're going to keep taking all these actions. I again, thank the Mayor for giving us the resources to do this so that we can protect all New Yorkers. Thank you.

**Mayor:** Thank you very much, Mitch. And thank you again for your leadership and all the efforts of everyone at Health + Hospitals, Test and Trace, Department of Health, everyone who's out there getting the testing done and getting the word out to the community. And thank you again to all the community leaders who are helping us do it. All right, one more update on another topic. And this is again, crucial to New York City and our future for the next decade, the census. So, we had a major victory yesterday, the ninth circuit court, the federal court in California affirmed that the census count should continue into October. So we've had now two federal court decisions in favor of going back to the original deadline at the end of October, the courts are being consistent. President Trump is still trying to block this action. We expect him to try and appeal further to the Supreme Court.

So in the meantime there is obviously a question we all have of what's going to be the final disposition of the census? But what we're doing now is we're not letting up. We are continuing to do outreach, particularly in areas where the response rate has been too low in Brooklyn and

Queens, there will be continued outreach efforts at least through Monday. The phone banking, the street efforts. We still have an opportunity to drive our number up and ensure New York City gets its fair share of representation and federal resources. And we're going to need that more than ever. So right now, as of the end of yesterday, our self-response rate was 60.9 percent, which is now an even lower gap between us and the nation. The gap between us and the national average rate is 5.6 percent. That is a lot less than it was in 2010 and even earlier this year. That gap is crucial. Because remember the results are comparative. The better you do against the national average, the more resources you get. So we've done well, especially in the context of the pandemic. And I thank all New Yorkers who have been part of it and the census team, but we still have more to do. And while the window appears to be reopening, let's go through it. So if you haven't filled out your census form, please do it right away. If you get a knock on the door about the census, answer it, it is crucial for this city. If you want to help us get the word out that people can still fill out their census form, you can sign up to phone bank at [nyc.gov/censuscalls](https://nyc.gov/censuscalls). So we are racing the clock now. We still have an opportunity to go farther. Let's take every moment we have and make sure New York City gets counted. Okay. A few words in Spanish –

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish:]

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

**Moderator:** We will not begin our Q and A. As a reminder, we're joined today by Chancellor Carranza, Dr. Katz, Dr. Chokshi and Census Director Julie Menin. First question today goes to Kala from PIX.

**Question:** Good morning to everyone on the call and congratulations on 1,600 schools. Today's an exciting day. It's nice to see the city like this. So after the UFT spoke this morning, they said that they were considering taking the city to court. And I want to know if you're considering shutting down schools in those ten zip codes that we talked about earlier by Monday, if the numbers do not improve?

**Mayor:** Kala thank you, first of all, I can hear in your voice, that you're feeling the excitement of this day. And I thank you for that. Kala look, we are monitoring constantly what is happening in each and every school. And so it's not about big numbers. It's about what's specifically happening each school determines how we approach each school. So this is why we have the situation room. And I'll give you a live example here. The situation room is looking at every positive test case we get in our entire school system. They are looking at it from the perspective of where a teacher or a staff member or a student lives, their home address, what their work address is, school address. And we're seeing no indication of any upsurge in those ten zip codes inside the public schools. I keep saying there appears to be a real separation between what's happening in the neighborhoods versus what's happening in the public schools. They really do have a different constituency. The other thing that's crucial to note is we are constantly testing at the schools in those zip codes, and we've been working with the unions on this. And so for example the unions wanted to see us test at some schools in one of those zip codes in that area. We went to FDR High School. We went to P.S. 164, between those two locations, 178 members of those school communities were tested. 178. Out of that 178 only one came back positive. So

that's astoundingly low. So we're going to watch the situation very, very carefully. Now the bigger question of course, is what happens in these communities overall in the coming days? And what does it mean for all of us? We're watching and the decision will be made based on the facts of whether we need to do a fuller shutdown in those communities. But so far again, we see a real separation between what's happening in some of those neighborhoods and what's happening in the public schools nearby. Go ahead, Kala.

**Question:** Okay. And then, you know, I've been on this call every day since we started this journey on reopening schools. And you've always said, there's nothing like in-person learning. But my question is what's the point of these students going back to the classroom to be taught by teachers who were actually virtual? So they're still staring at a computer, but inside a classroom. After speaking with the CSA I thought the number of teachers needed was already supposed to be sorted out. So what happened and why aren't there enough teachers?

**Mayor:** Kala I'll start and I'll turn to the Chancellor. Overwhelmingly what you're seeing in our schools today, 1,600 schools around New York City, is adults teaching kids in-person and supporting them in lots of other ways as well. There's a whole lot of individual support being given on the educational level, let alone the mental health support and the physical health support. The food programs, so many things that happen in a school community. The situations where a child is looking at a screen while in a school building or not the majority by any stretch of imagination, but even when they occur, they still occur under the supervision of an adult who's there to help them and support them. It's an entirely different situation than a child alone at home, looking at a screen or with a parent who's doing their best to try and help, but is distracted by having to work at the same time. Or doesn't happen to speak the same language or whatever it may be. So the presence of educators and caring adults has a really magical impact, no matter what the specific situation of what's going on in that classroom at that moment. Chancellor?

**Chancellor Carranza:** Well, just to add to what the Mayor said, I think it's really important to be clear about the learning modalities that are taking place. Fully remote means fully remote. Student is somewhere, whether it's home or some other environment not with the direct supervision or the direct assistance of an educator or an adult, an educator in a building. What is happening in, as the Mayor mentioned in some very minimal circumstances is that as we continue to build our teacher pool, our substitute teacher pool, as we continue to bring people in that are educators, to be able to man classrooms there are circumstances where students will have a virtual experience in the school building. Now the power of that is very much what the Mayor said. There are services and supports that happen in school buildings that are just not possible outside of school buildings, the guidance counseling, the social workers, the socialization that students have. It's even very important to recognize the trauma that not only students, but adults have had and undergone since March, as we've dealt with this crisis. The mere fact of being together, being able to process – this morning, the Mayor and I were able to see a classroom where the teacher was taking students through a social emotional learning protocol, where they were talking about how do they feel coming back to the school building? They hadn't been there since March. What are they thinking? Where are they on a chart? That ability to be able to have those kinds of experiences are uniquely experiences that students have within a school building. The instruction, the learning, the learning modality is but one of many facets of what makes an



education an education. So as the Mayor and I have continued to say, we will continue to build our capacity. We will continue to build that experience for students as we go forward.

**Mayor:** Yeah and Kala to your other point about staffing. I'm going to say it again. We are dealing with an absolutely unprecedented situation, three types of learning happening simultaneously, biggest school system in the nation by far, in the middle of a pandemic. This is an extraordinary balancing act. And I've said, I think what had to happen months ago was resetting the entire personnel process and breaking out of the way it had been done in the past and doing it an entirely different way. We learned that lesson the hard way, but what we've been able to do with a lot of great work by folks at the Department of Education is rebound, get a lot more staff into play, get the schools up and running. Over these next weeks we're going to make a lot of adjustments to get the staffing levels to be exactly what we need them to be and the right people in the right places. As always happens at the beginning of the school year. And I've talked to the union leaders about this as has Richard. It takes weeks in a normal school year for all the staffing realities to sort out. It will take weeks here too. But we're up and running. When everything is said and done and everyone is in their final assignments, at that point, we'll give an update on exactly how many additional staff were needed for this extraordinary situation. But what our educators and staff prove today is they could get the largest school system in the country up and running. You're seeing it with your own eyes and we'll keep making those adjustments to make it better literally every week.

**Moderator:** A quick programming note, we're also joined today by Dr. Long and Senior Advisor Dr. Jay Varma. The next question goes to Henry from Bloomberg.

**Question:** Hello, Mr. Mayor, how are you doing?

**Mayor:** Good Henry. How are you?

**Question:** I'm okay. You know, I spoke to Avi Greenstein in Borough Park Rabbi, who is the Executive Director of the Borough Park Jewish Community Council because they're having a mask giveaway and it's being done completely by themselves with a donor who paid for 400,000 masks to be given away. And he says he's had no contact with any senior official in your administration. And he is a little perplexed by it and a little bit angry about it. Because this is the Community Council. They have the contacts and the community. And after all that I've heard about you reaching out to the community, I was really surprised to hear him express this bewilderment about how there has been no contact with his organization.

**Mayor:** Henry?

**Question:** And yes. So can you explain, here's the question –

**Mayor:** I get the question. Henry, I have sat in the offices of the Borough Park Jewish Community Council, many times over the years. This is an area I represented in the City Council. I know the organization well, I've supported the organization in many ways. One of my top aides who has been working with the community constantly, Pinny Ringel lives within walking distance of that organization and has been in communication with them, has invited

them on the conference calls we've been having with our Health leadership. We'll get you the chapter and verse. I don't know why the organization keeps claiming they haven't been engaged when they have been engaged. But I will tell you any community organization that wants to be part of the many, many ways that we're communicating from especially our Health officials and with Dr. Katz leading the way. They're all welcome at the table and they have been welcome at the table. So we'll go double – redouble that invitation to that organization again today. Go ahead.

**Question:** Well then you're, you're basically calling him a liar, but he's –

**Mayor:** Henry, don't put words in my mouth respectfully. I'm saying there has been outreach. We asked the question when this was raised previously, and again, the liaison to the community who lives in Borough Park, affirmed that he had personally outreached and invited them into the calls when we were having. I don't know what else to tell you. So if you need to see the email exchanges, we'll get it to you. Go ahead.

**Question:** He said that if you would, if you had informed him that Dr. Katz would be in the neighborhood to have that news conference in which he was insulted and humiliated, he might've been able to intervene and stop that situation from happening.

**Mayor:** Henry again, we would welcome it. We would welcome his involvement.

**Question:** The communication is definitely failing to one degree or another.

**Mayor:** Henry, respectfully, I'm going to challenge you. I really don't think that's fair. You talked to one person.

**Question:** Challenge him.

**Mayor:** I know – you talked to one person and Dr. Katz will now talk about his experience, dealing with dozens and dozens of community leaders and organizations. And people have been welcomed and embraced and appreciated. And they've been very appreciative of Dr. Katz's role and everyone else's role trying to work together to get them information. Go ahead, Dr. Katz

**President Katz:** Well, again, I'd say, you know, one of the great things about my community is the tremendous diversity in every way, including opinion. And we will reach out again. I have been on the phone with so many different leaders, but again, Borough Park is a place where there are hundreds of synagogues, right? People may think of the Jewish community as being one thing, but we are not. And so if there are people who feel left out for whatever reason, we're happy to redouble our efforts as the Mayor has said.

**Mayor:** Okay, go ahead.

**Question:** The next is Matt Chayes from Newsday.

**Mayor:** Matt?

**Question:** Okay. Good morning. Thanks for taking my call. I appreciate it. And Mr. Mayor, can you tell me why you've used the Sheriff for duties like quarantine enforcement and not the NYPD?

**Mayor:** You know, the Sheriff's Office has done an incredible job. They really have. And they obviously did not have the responsibility Matt for day to day law enforcement at the neighborhood level that the NYPD does have. But they have been great about swinging into special assignments. And it's really been a good division of labor. And it's obviously been working. Go ahead.

**Question:** My second question is how many NYPD officers have been fined for failing to wear a mask? And yesterday you said, this is a quote, the NYPD has the tools to implement those penalties, referring to them not wearing a mask, and they should. What precisely is the internal penalty? And if you don't know, do you want to know?

**Mayor:** Yes, I do. There's obviously a range of disciplinary penalties that can be used by the NYPD. For this particular offense. We'll get to that right away. It's simple. And I appreciate the question, Matt, because it's just, again, these are the folks who enforce the law. They also have to live up to the law and people need to see them living up to the law. So I want us to get those numbers out of how many people have been penalized. Not because I take joy in it. I don't. I'd love it if not a single officer have to be penalized. And there are going to be times, as I've said, we're officers literally have to have a mask off, particularly if they're eating or drinking, and there could be other legitimate reasons. But if there's not a legitimate reason, they should have a mask on like everybody else. If they don't, there should be a penalty and you should see the results. So we'll get that to you.

**Moderator:** The next is Yehudit it from Borough Park 24 News.

**Question:** Oh, hi. Hi, good morning. I just want to say at first that I love the block party idea, which really puts a positive spin on a difficult situation. But I just wanted to ask of course New York City's Test and Trace Corps is doing its best to stop the spread of COVID and we really appreciate everything the City is doing. However, I've just heard that some New Yorkers who have tested positive for COVID-19 with all of its terrible and uncomfortable symptoms, sometimes feel bombarded by Health inspectors from the Test and Trace Corps who they report sometimes visit their homes multiple times in one day. And sometimes make as many as eight calls to them. And I was just wondering, first of all, are these home visits safe? And also, are so many of them necessary? Like for instance, could they, could the information be gathered via email or text?

**Mayor:** Let me start and turn to Dr. Katz. So, I think it's a very good question. The goal here, of course, is, if someone tests positive, to make sure that they can safely separate and they have all the support they need. It is important, by definition, to, one, check-in, make people know that they can ask questions, get help if they need it for free; second, to make sure people are honoring the quarantine. And that is obviously the law of this state. Sometimes, if we're not reaching someone by phone, a home visit makes a lot of sense to find out what's going on. And then, of

course, it has to be done safely with distancing, with masks usage, etcetera. But keeping the quarantine is a crucial part of the equation and it helps to save lives. I hear your point, there has to be a balance, and if people feel it's too much, we have to make sure that that isn't happening where it isn't necessary. If no one's responding, that's when there is extra outreach. Dr. Katz?

**President Katz:** Thanks very much for the feedback. I think the Mayor has said it well. We want to make sure that people have the resources they need in order to quarantine. If they're positive, we want to make sure that they have the medicines they need so that they don't have to go out to the pharmacy. We do want to check on them, especially if they're not answering telephone, to be sure that they are quarantining. But I'll take the feedback back and look to see whether or not there have been cases where there were multiple people coming to be sure that there's not a problem with communication among the different members of the staff.

**Mayor:** Go ahead.

**Question:** And then my second question is the Jewish community really appreciates all the extra protection over the high holidays that police provided. And I'm wondering now, as Dr. Katz mentioned that people are going to be eating and sleeping outside their homes for about a week and they might feel vulnerable in New York City to crime. I was wondering if the police are aware that people are going to be outside sometimes all night, and if there's going to be any expert police protection?

**Mayor:** I think it's a great question. I think – and we'll double check this for sure, but historically the NYPD in those precincts is very aware of the time of year for the community and the importance of helping the community to feel safe and secure. I appreciate you pointing out that people really do feel that positive presence at the key moments of the year and the holiest times of the year. And that's been a good tradition, we will continue that. So, I'll make sure that precincts know to be extra aware and extra visible in support of the community. But what I've heard throughout the high holidays is a lot of appreciation of NYPD's presence to protect the community. Go ahead.

**Moderator:** The next is Erin from Politico.

**Question:** Good morning, Mr. Mayor. My first question is with regard to schools. So, now that the middle schools and the high schools are actually open, how many additional teachers have you in fact hired to staff these now open schools?

**Mayor:** As I said, Erin, we're going to tote that up and get you that number when everything is complete. Like I said, I've talked to Chancellor and his team, and even the unions acknowledge that it takes weeks typically in the beginning of a normal school year, without a pandemic, to sort out all the staffing, to get everyone finally in place. There's some movement around between schools, some extra people come in, this is all very normal. This is now made obviously more challenging by three different types of learning simultaneously. So, now that we have started across the board, which everyone should be very proud of, we're now going to be making those adjustments over the next few weeks. We'll get to a final lockdown roster for every school. And then we'll be able to tell you what we had to add from the summer to make this happen. But the

bottom line is, we've been able to get the staffing we need and get it where it is needed and kudos to everyone in the DOE for making that happen. Go ahead, Erin.

**Question:** Okay. I have a question with regards to these clusters. I'm just wondering, when you look at the increased overall and the City's infection rates, is that entirely explained about what's going on in these cluster neighborhoods? Or, beyond those neighborhoods, is there also, you know, some degree of an uptick being seen citywide?

**Mayor:** I'll start and I'll turn to Dr. Varma and Dr. Chokshi. Look, what we're seeing is broadly two different realities – 10 ZIP codes that are having a real serious challenge that we're addressing intensely with the community. And then, the other ZIP codes of the city overwhelmingly are not having that reality, continue to have a very low level. We want to keep it that way. So, again, I want everyone in the ZIP codes that are not affected to keep their guard up, continue with the mask wearing and social distancing, continue to get tested while we apply intensive tools to this area. But I do think it's two distinct realities so far. Go ahead, Dr. Varma.

**Senior Advisor Varma:** Yeah. Thank you very much. We are definitely seeing, as the Mayor has reported, an increase in the number of positive cases, that's primarily being driven by the neighborhoods that we've identified, both the high priority ZIP codes, as well as the other areas of concern around there. As people know, during the period before this recent increase in cases, we had somewhere around 200, 250 new cases every day, and that number has increased considerably. We continue to work vigorously throughout the city to keep those case numbers down as well, because, obviously, we are quite concerned that even if the problem is primarily occurring in selected areas of the city, we're all connected. We all breathe the same air. We do business with each other. We see each other in other places. So, we have to maintain vigilance everywhere we are.

**Mayor:** Dr. Chokshi?

**Commissioner Chokshi:** The only thing that I would add is that when we looked at the numbers, the 10 neighborhoods that are of greatest concern represent 27.5 percent of the new cases over the past two weeks citywide, while they represent about seven-and-a-half percent of the of the overall population of the city. So, primarily, it is concentrated in the areas of greatest concern. But, as Dr. Varma has said, we want to bring this concerted focus to those areas to prevent further spread across the city.

**Mayor:** Thank you.

**Moderator:** The next is Sydney from Staten Island Advance.

**Question:** Hey, Mr. Mayor. At this point, do you and the Chancellor know how many schools will have students returned for in-person learning, but taught by a teacher remotely who isn't in the classroom listening – who isn't in the classroom, and, you know, they're listening to them on a device like what's going on at Tottenville High School, at Wagner High School on Staten Island? And will this in-person virtual setup be norm for certain schools for the rest of the year?



**Mayor:** Basically, the answer is no, Sydney. This is something we continue to work on as we bring in more staffing. I'm not saying it won't ever happen, as needed, but I want to be very clear – the goal is to keep staffing up to help every school get to the point that, you know, can do the maximum in-person learning directly with educators. When they do need to turn to a virtual approach, even with the kids in school, we're making the point that there's still a lot of adult support educationally and otherwise being provided to those kids in the school. But the goal is to keep providing the staffing, keep increasing the amount of in-person learning, keep increasing also on the remote side the amount of synchronous learning. All this will build up over the coming weeks. Chancellor?

**Chancellor Carranza:** Just to add – only to add to what the Mayor said, that these are the exceptions, not the rule. And, again, schools have differing circumstances. So, I actually applaud the principals in their ingenuity and creativity and making sure students are going to have instruction and that it's content specific instruction that's high quality. Again, as we continue to build our teacher pool you're going to see even in those situations where that'll be mitigated. But this is not what we want. This is not going to be the standard. And, again, this is the first day and it will look very different as we go forward.

**Mayor:** Go ahead.

**Question:** Yeah, you didn't say how many roughly you think are, you know, doing this type of setup. Can you answer that?

**Mayor:** Chancellor, if you have that at your fingertips, otherwise we'll get that back to you.

**Chancellor Carranza:** No, again, this is the first day, so we're working with our superintendents to gather all kinds of information, including the innovative models that are being used across the city. So, we will have more to say about this later.

**Moderator:** We have time for two more for today. The next is Reuven Blau from The City.

**Question:** Hi, Mr. Mayor. Thanks for taking the time to talk to me, I really appreciate it [inaudible] take our questions.

**Mayor:** Thank you, Reuven. How are you doing today?

**Question:** I'm good. How are you?

**Mayor:** Good. Thank you. Good day.

**Question:** I've got a little bit of a longer question and I hope you can take patience to listen to this one. I'm not sure if you're familiar with John Burns – was under investigation – a question about John Burns, and I just want to list a couple of facts before, sort of, asking the question. He was under investigation for months when he was reappointed for a five-year – a second five-year term at OATH. The investigation concluded that he had harassed a female staffer, oversaw a toxic work environment, and tried then tried to retaliate against the woman for filing the

complaint against him, but he was never suspended and continued [inaudible] his full salary and his disciplinary trial was moved to the NYPD trial room, but was never put on the Department's public schedule. And then your – you know, the press shop ignored questions about the trial that was upcoming for several weeks when I was asking them about it. So, my question is, first of all, what message does this send to other women who work for the city? And also, why was he given preferential treatment?

**Mayor:** Rueven, I do not know the details of the case and so I can't speak to the many specifics you're putting forward. What I know is that anyone who acts inappropriately needs to feel the consequences and there needs to be consistency in the approach. So, I can't comment on the specifics. We can certainly get back to you on that. I want to make sure that if anyone does something wrong, there are consequences and that it's handled right and consistently – that's always what we're trying to do. But let me get details on this one for you so I can give you a better answer. Go ahead.

**Question:** Okay. I appreciate that. And just to sort of follow up on the same question, who's – I mean, is there somebody in the administration that I should follow up with when you say, you know, that you're going to get details and follow through? And also, I'm just concerned, like, just wondering why there was sort of this coverup. I mean, obviously he's somebody who you've known for a long time and people are saying that they think that it's because of your close affiliation with him that he was given this preferential treatment.

**Mayor:** Again, you're using – and you have every right to, but I want to call out words that are, you know, value judgements or editorial comments that I don't know the facts of and I can't affirm. We don't believe we would not allow a “coverup.” There's no “preferential treatment.” I don't believe in those things and my team doesn't believe in them and we don't allow it. These issues are governed over by the Law Department and the counsel's office, and they are rigorous and they treat these situations very seriously and they're very focused on ensuring there are consequences for anyone that does anything wrong, and then it's all quite divulged on a regular basis. So, I just don't agree with your characterization broadly, but, again, we will get you the specifics. The folks who have the details are the Law Department and the counsel's office.

**Moderator:** Last question for today goes to Christina Vega from Chalkbeat.

**Question:** Hi, Mayor. Thanks for taking my question, this is for you and the Chancellor. Typically, schools release attendance data daily. We haven't seen any so far for this week. Anecdotally at the schools that we've shown up to we've seen fewer kids than expected. So, are you worried about attendance? When will we see numbers? And is it possible that parents aren't filling out remote-only forms, but not showing up?

**Mayor:** Okay. I'm not worried, Christina – and I'll turn to the Chancellor, but I just want to give my personal frame – not worried, because we're in the middle of an absolutely extraordinary moment. And again, I want us to separate business as usual and a normal school year from opening the largest school system in the country in the middle of a pandemic – it's two different realities. So, what we're going to see here – we have been seeing is, getting the attendance information, making sure it's accurate, getting it out is slower than it's been in normal situations.

We've obviously got multiple levels of attendance that has to be taken between in-person, blended at home, full remote. It's a much more complicated reality. We want to get these numbers right. It's going to take more time than usual. So, I'm not worried, because I think everything will sort out over the next few weeks. I think it is natural – as a parent myself, it's natural that some parents are waiting and seeing they want to watch how the first days go before they make a final decision of what to do. I also think it will be natural – I've talked to a bunch of parents who, as they've seen these first stages of schools, are starting to say, so when do we get to opt back in if we want to? And I think that's going to be a big discussion towards the end of this month as parents have that opportunity for their kids to come back in. So, what we all have to have in my view is a little bit of sense of kind of the organic reality – parents will watch for the coming days and weeks and then make more decisions. And I think you'll see the attendance keep growing as people see consistent success with the schools. Go ahead, Chancellor.

**Chancellor Carranza:** I think, Mr. Mayor, you hit the nail on the head. Again, we have multiple models that are being implemented this year. So, that means programming and then setting up the attendance taking, there are multiple tracks, as we know. So, all of that requires a change in how we gather our attendance. But we'll have much more accurate figures to report in the coming days.

**Mayor:** Go ahead, Christina.

**Question:** My second question is, you keep saying that you're monitoring closely the coronavirus cases and whether there are any links to schools. So, I'm wondering if you've found any evidence of transmission happening within any school communities. And the city has said that schools will be shut down if there are – apart from reaching the three percent seven-day rolling average, if there are outbreaks – recurrent outbreaks within schools, but I don't know that there's been any data publicly released about any possible cases of those. So, have you traced any outbreaks and how will the public know? Or, will this data be shared publicly?

**Mayor:** Yeah. The data will be shared and I'll get an update on the, you know, how that's going to be done. But here's the bottom line, what we've seen – and the situation room has been very productive. Again, it's DOE, it's Health Department, Health + Hospitals, Test and Trace, great leadership from our Buildings Commissioner Melanie La Rocca, and her team. We're just getting constant updates from them on what they're seeing and, typically, we're finding a fairly low number of cases, again, with a school system that's going to have up to 500,000 kids in-person this week, and well over 100,000 teachers and staff in the buildings. We're seeing relatively few cases each day. We have seen some cases where a classroom had to be quarantined, a pod had to be taken out for two weeks, but relatively few. We've seen a decent number of cases – and get you exact number – where a building had to be closed for 24 hours and then they've consistently come back up and running. So, we'll get you the update on where we stand. The only situation in the whole time now since the situation room has been up, which I believe started just about two weeks ago – the only situation where we have a school where there were two cases that were not related that lead to a longer shutdown just happened the last 24 hours. It's the JFK program, it is a District 75 special education school in Queens. It has 262 students in their blended learning program and 88 staff. So, that school, as of today, is shut down for two weeks. That's the only one the entire time that has experienced that. And what's going to happen, I think, in a case like

this, is what we've been telling people all along – those two weeks, kids, of course, will get instruction remotely. Then the school will be back up. Everyone who was quarantined will come right back and we'll continue with the next 10 months of the school year. So, we're going to – or, nine months of school year. So, we're going to continue to use that approach. It's very precise. And the situation room has really proven to be a great methodology and tremendously helpful. Please, Chancellor.

**Chancellor Carranza:** Also, Christina, there is a positive cases map that is live on our website and it has all the active cases and closures in real time. So, you can find that on our district website.

**Mayor:** Thank you very much, Chancellor. Well, everybody, as we conclude today, first of all, just a programming note to remind you, we will have our next press conference again on Monday. In the meantime, and every day, look, New Yorkers have proven we can fight against any situation, we can overcome any situation. Now, we have tremendous good news today with the opening of all our schools, and that is an achievement every single one of you contributed to and should be proud of. And we have a challenge, but New Yorkers are not scared of challenges. We have 10 ZIP codes where we have a distinct problem, another six where we're concerned. We're going to throw everything we've got at those areas to turn it around. The crucial point is to keep moving the city forward, to keep doing what has worked, to ensure that as we reopen, as we restart, that we sustain it. And we've all known there'll be ups and downs along the way, but, again, it's how we fight those challenges together – that's what really matters. So, if we do everything we're capable of, we'll be able to keep our schools open our businesses open and keep the city moving forward. I know that's what all New Yorkers want. I hear it all the time. I believe that they truly are willing to do what it takes. So, let's pull together and work again as the team we have been that brought this city back before and let's continue this progress. Thank you, everybody.

###