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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO HOLDS MEDIA AVAILABILITY

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Good morning, everybody. I want to start with a personal statement as I'm joined here by leaders of labor unions that represent so many of the hard working people who make our school system run, take care of our kids, educate them and protect them, feed them, so many good people work every day in our schools to uplift our kids, and there is nothing more precious than taking care of the children of New York City. Parents, families entrust all of us with their children every day during the school year, and they need to know that we care about those kids just as much as they do, and we do. So I want to thank my colleagues in labor, who I know are committed to our children and committed to this city, and you'll hear from them in a moment, and they will also make abundantly clear, their job is always to defend the interests of their members. That is the power and the importance of the labor movement and we have all worked together in a constructive manner over these last days to determine the best way forward for our school system.

The fact is whenever people gathered together, and we've all known each other a long time, there's going to be disagreements. There's going to be tough issues to work through. It's a very complex moment in history to say the least. Real powerful issues had to be discussed and resolution had to be found, but everyone did so in a constructive spirit because there's a lot of mutual respect and a lot that we've all been through together, and we have a common, deep concern for the city. We also believe profoundly in the New York City public schools and the meaning, the idea of public education and how precious it is, how crucial it is to our society. I'd say now more than ever a moment when democracy is threatened, public education actually more and more as the underpinning of our democratic society. So a lot was on the line here to work through, but I'm pleased to report that we've come to an agreement to move forward, to address real concerns that have been raised about how to do things the right way, how to do them the safe, healthy way, how to make sure people are prepared for the school year under absolutely unprecedented conditions, and I want to emphasize that.

We have a huge obligation to get the health and safety part right which is why we have literally set the global gold standard. We have said New York City is taking the best practices, the strongest methods from all around the world and applying them all together here in our public schools, the highest standard anywhere in the world, to protect our kids, our families, our educators, our staff. We also have extraordinarily complex issues that we have to work through, as we're asking educators, as well as parents and kids to make sense of blended learning, something we have never done before, never been done on this scale anywhere before. So these challenges required a thoughtful approach and what we've agreed to is to make sure that the health measures are in place, to make sure there is time for the appropriate preparation for our

educators, to make sure that we can have the smoothest beginning of the school year, even under extraordinarily challenging conditions, and to move forward in a spirit of unity.

Let me give you an update on how the timing is going to work under this plan. So, the normal school year, educators, staff are in their buildings by the day after Labor Day and that will be true here as well, Tuesday, September 8th. The school days, the instructional days were slated to begin September 10th. We're going to hold that for a few days. We're going to allow preparation days for our educators and staff to get ready under these unprecedented circumstances. So, September 10th and 11th, September 14th and 15th will be days devoted to preparation, to really making sure that blended learning can work for everybody, that everyone understands their role, everyone has had a chance to practice together and coordinate. There's been an opportunity to communicate with families. And then starting on the 16th of September, we will have a three-day transitional period, only three days. For those three days, instruction will begin remotely for all students. During that transitional period, there will be instruction for students, but there'll also be additional preparation for educators and staff. And then on September 21st, Monday, the school buildings open full strength, we go to blended learning as has been described previously.

We have students coming into the buildings. What would have happened on September 10th now happens on September 21st. So, it's blended learning, some kids in school one day, other kids in school another day. The buildings will be open and operational and taking kids into for that crucial in-person learning. And one of the things I want to say we affirmed in these discussions is nothing, nothing replaces in-person learning. Our educators have been clear that as important as it is to provide the very best remote learning we can to address the digital divide, provide free devices and internet service for kids, do everything we can to make remote work, nothing is as powerful as in-person learning. So that will begin on Monday, September 21st.

The point that I raised earlier about safety, one of the reasons we're confident in our ability to keep everyone safe is we now have over 200 testing locations in New York City, many of which are very near our public school buildings, some of which are literally across the street from a public school building, but we'll be augmenting that with mobile testing vans, with testing tents at school sites, we're going to make testing available every month in every school, and it's going to be made available in a way that maximizes the ease for everyone in the school community to get tested, who needs to get tested. We'll be doing a monthly medical monitoring process that's been worked through by our health leadership, Dr. Jay Varma and Dr. Dave Chokshi, along with medical leadership representing the United Federation of Teachers, and they've agreed on a plan that will make sure that testing happens on an ongoing basis, but I want to emphasize in a way that is convenient and easy and straightforward for everyone in the school community, and of course is free. So that on top of everything else that we've laid in place, ample supply of facemasks and PPE, constant cleaning of our schools, including electric static cleaning, social distancing throughout the school day, pods so a small number of students and staff stay together. A host of measures to keep everyone safe, again, the strongest standard in the world.

Mayor: Before I turn to the Chancellor, I will simply say this, that everyone here – and you'll hear from each of us – everyone here is committed to children and committed to working families. And we know that families have gone through so much. Over a million families lost their livelihood just in the last six months. So many people are hurting in this town, so many

people are hoping to get back to work. So many single-parent households where the ability to send a child to school is crucial. Everyone knows kids have been through so much, so much trauma that can only be addressed with consistent help from highly-dedicated, highly-trained adults, our educators, our mental health experts, everyone who is going to be there for our kids, and that includes all the other folks who work in the school community. [Inaudible] That's all going to be happening again on Monday, September 21st. So, with that, I want to again, thank all my colleagues for coming to this agreement so we can move forward together. And it's my pleasure now to turn to the man who's been leading this extraordinary effort to bring back the New York City public schools after this crisis. Our Chancellor, Richard Carranza –

Schools Chancellor Carranza: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. I want to add my voice in thanking the leaders of our unions, our labor partners for never walking away from the tough, tough issues that we've been grappling with. So, I want to thank them for staying engaged and working through all these difficult issues. For six months now, we've been charting a path for public education and we've been working night and day with our labor partners to make sure our school leaders, our educators, our nurses, custodians, food service workers, school safety agents – everyone that is in a school building is ready for the new school year.

Sometimes that means taking a few extra days to prepare, which is what we're announcing here today. Teachers, who usually get two days of professional development at the beginning of the school year, and we all know this is going to be a school year unlike any school year we've ever started, will now get nine. And we've heard from our educators, we've heard from our school leaders, we've heard from everyone in our schools that have said we need some more time. Students who haven't been inside a school building in half a calendar year – think about that – will have a chance to reconnect with their school, meet their teachers and classmates, and make sure that they have the tools that they need to be successful for this school year. There's a lot of ground work that's already been done to lay the groundwork for this successful school year. This will strengthen and improve and make it so that we do have the safest start of the school year.

What we'll do in the next couple of weeks is build on the success that's already been put in place and adapt where necessary. But it's going to be more important than ever that we remember the two words that we pivoted to remote learning with in March – flexibility and patience, with each other, with our students because we're all taking on something we've never taken on before. So, we know this school year is going to be like any other school year we've ever had and we're excited about tackling these hard, hard issues but doing in a way that keeps our students, our staff, and everyone associated with our schools health and safe.

Mayor: Thank you so much, Chancellor. And now, I want to turn to the labor leaders who represent the people who do the work every day to educate and protect our kids. And I'll start with the President of the United Federation of Teachers – and I want to just say at the outset, again, Michael Mulgrew and I have known each other a long time. We've been through many, many conversations in the last days, but even more importantly, over years and years. And it's very true, he is a strong, strong voice for the people he represents. He's also someone – I remind people always – who taught in the classroom, who feels out importantly the work of public education affects children and families. So, we understand what it means for this whole city. And

I want to thank you, Michael, for – it's been tough discussions, but very productive discussions throughout. And I want to thank you. My pleasure to introduce Michael Mulgrew.

President Michael Mulgrew, United Federation of Teachers: I want to thank the Mayor. Thank you, Bill. This is what I would hold up as an example for other places to look out on how people are supposed to get things done. They're not easy, but I sit here today, talking to the parents, to all of my members – the teachers, the guidance counselors, the para-professionals, all the therapists, and I can say to you now, because we have our independent medical experts have stamped this plan and we now can say the New York City Public School system has the most aggressive policies and greatest safeguards of any school system in the United States of America. And we would not be here at this point, if it wasn't for everyone who was at this table right now, as well as many others who have worked tirelessly to get us here. This has been a difficult time for our city and what you – the things that we're going to still have to deal with are going to be difficult also. But I think it's incumbent upon all the leaders in the city and all the leaders inside of each school to take this spirit of making sure that we're working together, to make sure that what we're doing is in the interest of everyone who walks into that school building. Every teacher calls their students their kids – they never call them their students, because they're their children. The principals call them their children. We take very seriously the responsibility to keep them safe. We take it very seriously when we're talking to their parents, that we want them to know we're doing everything in our power to keep their children safe. But we also want to make sure that we're doing everything in our power as a city to keep the people who are doing that phenomenal work in our schools every day safe also. And that's what we're here today to announce, but we're also announcing at the same time that we all understand we now have another difficult road to go down. The amount of work that is going to have to be done over the next couple of weeks, just to get all of our schools prepared and ready to go and then make sure that we're all doing everything in our power to keep each and every school system safe and school safe – but, if there's a problem, all being there together to say, we will bring relief quickly, and we will make sure that no school is being left out there to struggle on their own. That is the commitment and the announcement that you are hearing from all of us today.

It's not going to be easy, but I'm very proud to say that we did this at this moment, but now it's up to all of us to be there to support each other, to support our kids and to make sure that we are the ones keeping the largest and best school system in the United States open, running, and safe. So, I thank you – all of my colleagues who are here today.

Mayor: Thank you very, very much, Michael. And I affirm largest and best school system in the country. And we're seeing just heroic efforts by our educators, by our staff, everyone at the DOE to get ready for school, to serve our kids and families. And our administrators are being asked to create whole new approaches and they're showing tremendous capacity, tremendous leadership as they do that. And I want to thank everyone who provides that leadership at our school level and here on behalf of all our administrators, the President of the CSA Mark Cannizzaro.

President Mark Cannizzaro, Council of School Supervisors and Administrators: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. And thank you, Chancellor, and Michael, and Henry for your partnership. This certainly has been a team effort, a total effort, and there has been some real difficult and challenging conversations at times, but we're here where we need to be at this point, and that's

really, what's, what's critical. You know, we talked about safety and we've been talking about safety issues for many, many months. And to hear that we've come to an agreement to make sure that our children and our educators are going to be safe is such a relief and makes me feel good personally, as well as professionally. And in addition to that, you know, time is always the commodity that educators are looking for and asking for – our days are so busy with students in and out – our children in and out of the buildings – and with so much to care for, there's always a need for more time in order to plan things effectively and appropriately. And although the task before us remains monumental, and time will not be a luxury right now, at least there is the time to start to think about things and make sure that we're able to provide the program for our students that we need and we're able to do it in a safe and conducive environment. And I'm just proud that we are here at this moment and we are going to continue to work together. And I just have to echo what Michael said – there are going to be schools that need some additional help and need some support and we are going to be there to support them, to make sure that we're all able to open successfully and provide a program that our parents and students and staff members are all proud of and want to return to and feel that it is in everyone's best interest. So, come November when it's time to opt back in, we're going to have many parents looking to get into this school system who have previously chosen remote. So, thank you all so much. And I look forward to the hard work that's ahead.

Mayor: Thank you very, very much, Mark. And finally, I want you to hear from a man who represents folks who do such crucial work, and they often don't get the recognition they deserve. So, I just want to say thank you to all the people who work in our schools who are members of DC37 AFSCME. I want to do a particular appreciation – offer a particular appreciation for our food service workers. These folks, everyone, you know, all through the summer, we were able to say – unlike, unfortunately, so many other places in this country, we were able to say that no one in New York City will ever go hungry, that anyone who needs food will have filled no matter how many members of your family, no matter how tough your situation we'll provide food for you in every neighborhood. And that was in large measure because of the heroic efforts of the food service workers who went there every single day, made things happen for our families, protected them by providing them the nutrition they needed and kept the school buildings safe in the process. To them, and so many other good people who work to keep the school safe throughout the summer, they are a reminder to all of us what that hard work and that teamwork meant.

I also want to say, as I introduced Henry Garrido, that his union plays such a crucial role in the city in so many ways, far beyond just the school system. But also, his members depend on the school system for their kids. And so, this is a moment to recognize that we're all in this together in so many ways, but a special thanks to all those folks who worked so hard over the summer to keep things going. My pleasure to introduce the Executive Director of DC37 AFSCME Henry Garrido.

Executive Director Henry Garrido, DC37: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. Good morning. And let me thank you for your diligence and the work – thank the Chancellor, my colleagues Michael and Mark on this incredible effort. But most importantly, I want to thank the members of DC37 who have sacrificed themselves throughout this whole process. You know, we've lost 151 of our members due to the pandemic. So, for us, the safety of the kids, the parents and the safety of the

workers was the most thing. And both as a parent and as a leader representing, as the Mayor said more than 150,000 workers in the city, and almost 100,000 retirees whose children are in the school system, this was really important to us.

You know, there was a silver lining about this whole pandemic – has been that the war has recognized the work of people – every-day people who do work, you know, cafeteria workers, nurses, and people who sometimes get overlooked, right? Early childhood educators who did a tremendous job of keeping the kids is struck that even when the most challenging time. And so, we are here for them, and we are pleased to announce that the reopening the schools. I would – I will say to them we want to make sure that you are protected and that you are recognized for the work that you have done. It is imperative that we get back in the process of fully reopening the City of New York. And we believe fundamentally that the work that has been done will continue, but this plan that we're announcing today takes into consideration that monumental task opening the school system. As the Mayor said, more than 10,000 of DC37 members have continues to work throughout this process, serving more than a half-a-million New Yorkers every single day. Many of them actually worked throughout holidays that normally are scheduled during the school year. You know, the 4th of July, they continue to prepare food for many New Yorkers who are suffering from food insecurity. And so, you know, I give my most thanks and my pledge to continue to defend them.

I would just say to finish up, this was certainly not an easy thing to do. We understand some of the fears that our members are feeling right now. We understand the fear that the parents, you know, are feeling. And some measures, as a parent myself, we understand the implications for our children. But we must get this right, and the only way we're going to do that is if we all work together, parents, educators, leaders, to make sure that the school system continues to function is protected. Thank you for the opportunity and looking forward to reopening the schools.

Mayor: Thank you so much, Henry. And, everyone, you hear the common sense of resolve and the ability of all of us to work together, to get something done for our kids and our families. And it is made possible by the underlying fact that the people of this city have worked so hard for months now to fight back this disease. So, as we're talking about all these issues that we're all working on together, let's again, give thanks to every-day New Yorkers who put on those masks, kept social distancing, did things right, and allowed us to be at this point where we can take this step forward. And with that, I want to go over today's indicators before we turn to the media, because this really says why we're here to begin with. So, indicator number one, daily number of people admitted to New York City hospitals for suspected COVID-19, the threshold is 200 patients – today's report, 52. And again, within those 52, the number of confirmed positive for actual COVID-19 is 15 percent. Indicator number two, new reported cases on a seven-day average, threshold is 550 cases – today's report, 227. And number three, percentage of people testing citywide positive for COVID-19, that threshold is five percent – today's report 1.33 percent citywide.

With that, we will turn to our colleagues in the media and please let us all know the name and outlet of each journalist.

Moderator: We'll now begin today's Q-and-A. As a reminder, we're joined today by First Deputy Mayor Dean Fuleihan, Chancellor Carranza, Dr. Chokshi, Senior Advisor Jay Varma, UFT President Michael Mulgrew, CSA President Mark Cannizzaro, and DC37 President and Executive Director Henry Garrido. First question today goes to Andrew Siff from NBC.

Question: [Inaudible] everyone in attendance. Good morning. Unless I've missed it, I haven't heard anyone mentioned COVID testing, which, as of yesterday, the UFT said mandatory COVID testing was an absolute deal breaker here. So, Mayor, are you going to require that all teachers and staff and students be tested?

Mayor: So, Andrew, you know, I know you a long time, I respect you. I think you did miss it. It was said very clearly, there's going to be a monthly medical monitoring program. We're going to ensure every single school has this program. It will be governed over by our health leadership. We have to assess a certain number of kids in each school every single month. And yes, that will be done on a mandatory basis. Go ahead.

Question: You said mandatory wasn't your approach. You looked at other countries, that wasn't the best practice. So, what changed your mind? Was it the threat of a teacher's strike?

Mayor: Look, Andrew, again, we've all been working together. And what we've found here was a way that made sense, because it was being done over time on a monthly basis, a sample from each school, and a way worked. Each union will bring its own approach to this and the way we'll approach the kids, we're all working together to figure out the details, but what I know for sure is that every single school will have testing. It will be done every single month. It will be rigorous. We're going to be looking constantly for any signs of a challenge we have to address. And we're doing that right now, of course, in neighborhoods around the city. And anyone who tests positive, of course, will be isolated and it will trigger the test and trace apparatus. So, we found a way to do this in a way that makes sense and is attainable for a school system this large.

Moderator: The next is Brigid from WNYC.

Question: Good morning, Mr. Mayor, and to everyone who's there – congratulations. My first question is about the tweet that Council Member Mark Treyger sent last night, which may be not as relevant now, or maybe different given your announcement – but he tweeted that he was receiving more of the school leaders were informed last night that their schools could now use school money to purchase PPE for students and staff, which is a shift from what you've said previously, saying that PPE would be bought for each school centrally. So, I'm wondering, can you explain what guidance schools are being given and if it's changed?

Mayor: I'll start and turn to the Chancellor. Look, we've said from the beginning that we're going to make sure every school has what they need. And, you know, the list I gave you earlier, the extent of the cleaning, the extent of the PPE that's already been provided – this is unprecedented, obviously, and the Chancellor and I have been out in schools showing you and your colleagues exactly what's already been put in place and will be continued. So, Chancellor, you want to speak to that?

Chancellor Carranza: Yes. Thank you. Let me be very clear, we do not do policy by Twitter. And let's just be very clear about what we've said to schools – we will provide schools every day with a 30-day supply of all the PPE they need – masks both for adults and for children, for disinfectant, we will be cleaning the schools they will have the appropriate gowns if they're manning an isolation room. Every day, there will be 30 days of supply there and we will replenish it every day so there's constantly a 30-day supply – point, end of sentence, no question. That will happen. What we clarified for schools is, we've also been getting requests from schools can we purchase certain things? Some schools have said, we want to personalize masks with our school logo on them. Can we purchase those? Of course you can purchase those. So, what we're doing is giving schools absolute guidance on what they can do. And of course they can use their resources if they choose to use them that way to do and go above and beyond. But let's just be very clear, we will have all of that PPE, all of the supplies every single day purchased centrally so schools don't have to make that expense.

Question: Thanks so much. And another question that's about schools that somewhat tangential, Mr. Mayor – the Board of Elections managed to – excuse me, secure the Garden and the Barclays Center as early voting and election day poll sites, which take a little pressure off surrounding areas. But given all the other challenges faced in schools, will the City allow them to be used for early voting and election day school sites this year?

Mayor: It's a great question, Brigid. And I'll first say we've been so focused understandably on getting everything ready for this absolutely unprecedented start a school this year, that election day still seems a way off. Although I will note, it's only 63 days away. In the scheme of things, it seems like a ways off. We have to make sure that people are safe. We have to make sure that our schools can function. Now, granted, our schools are going to have a lot fewer kids in them than is normally the case. So, that does affect the equation, but I'll turn to Richard, because I want to hear the latest from him on the discussions in terms of election day and the Board of Elections.

Chancellor Carranza: So, as we continue to engage with the Board of Elections – listen, I was a government teacher, I believe in democracy, but I also believe that kids should be in school in the safest possible environment, especially during a pandemic. So, we continue to engage with the Board of Elections in finding alternate locations to be used as voting locations. We'll have more to say about that. But I think as I've had conversations with many of the gentlemen at this table we all agree that we should be limiting the amount of human beings entering school buildings, to the absolute minimum necessary to carry out our mission. And our mission is to educate kids.

Moderator: The next is Shant from the Daily News.

Question: Yeah, good morning, everyone. I still don't quite get how the COVID testing will work. So, if you could share some more detail on that, I'd appreciate it. I guess the main question is who exactly will be tested like, you know, if someone shows symptoms, do they get a test every month? Is there another way to select everyone who will get tested? Because I gather every month there won't be everyone at one specific school getting tested, but maybe only some of those people. Could just provide some details on that?

Mayor: Sure, Shant. I'll start with saying, you know, we're going to go over the broad strokes today. More information will be put out in the course of today and the next few days. But our health care leadership worked closely with the health care experts, for the UFT, on a common vision. And, again, it is every school that is doing this testing monthly. It is random. I want to be clear about that. So, it's a mix of members of the school community will be tested every month. Every union is going to work out their specific approach to it, but let's have a Dr. Varma and Dr. Chokshi just give very top lines on how this medical monitoring will be carried out.

Senior Advisor Jay Varma: Great. This is Jay Varma, I can start. I think the first most important thing is to remember that any child who is sick, first of all, should not be attending school and any child who is sick and has COVID symptoms should be taken to get COVID testing. So, the program, the medical monitoring program that you're hearing about today is really focused on the people who are physically present in the school. And so, therefore not people with symptoms. And the purpose of this is to really give us really good insight into how many people may be infected at any one time who don't have symptoms, because we know that's one of the challenges of this disease. And so, we are going to be working very closely with students, with parents with all the teachers, and the staff to develop a robust approach to developing a random sample of each school. And they will then have specimens collected in the school and then testing performed to give us results immediately that we can act on.

Mayor: Dr. Chokshi, do you want to add anything?

Commissioner Chokshi: That's exactly right. The one small thing that I will add is beyond the medical monitoring program, we want to continue to emphasize that testing remains available for all students and all staff free of charge.

Mayor: And I'll say, before we go back to Shant, I am reminding all parents, I'm reminding them also for their kids, over 200 locations right now in New York City where you can get a test for free. And this is something we're saying to all New Yorkers especially today, it's Get Tested Tuesday. If you haven't been tested or you haven't been tested in a long time, it's a good thing to do. It's simple, it's fast, it's easy, urging all people to do that. And parents, as we get closer to that day when kids will walk through the door of the school building, we urge them to make sure every child is tested. Please go ahead –

President Mulgrew: The doctors were very clear with us. They said, the most important thing that we are going to do is making sure that we're following the rules of social distancing, that PPE is being followed, that the cleaning is being followed, and ventilation is in place. But they said that we also, it was necessary they felt, because of the size of our school system, that we have a medical monitoring program. How it is done is the doctors are giving us the criteria in terms of the randomness of it. But it's basically a monthly program. What we're trying to do is not wait to see symptoms in a school. We want to see if there's a possibility, what you do with a medical monitoring program is that you're keeping everyone, you're checking everyone at all times, and if they, God forbid, there is any sort of a problem we can deal with it quickly so that we don't have a problem, a bigger problem. And that is the whole idea behind it. And we have seen this work and it's important to note also that when in areas as the city has been very successful already, if a school is inside of a ZIP code that has an uptick, what they did in Sunset

Park with the flood zone, the schools will now be under the same scenarios that if they're inside of a ZIP code, but there is no evidence of COVID in the school, the school will also have an increase in testing of everyone at the school building itself. So it's clear from – I just want everyone to understand, what we're doing is saying all the things that are most important, the PPE, the social distancing, the cleaning, the ventilation, we have that, but we're going even a step further by saying, we're going to monitor everything because we're going to make sure that if there's any signs, that there could be a problem that we're in there as quick as possible and stopping it very quickly, because that's what we owe each and all of our school communities.

Mayor: Go ahead, Shant.

Question: Yeah. Thanks for that. So, just one more thing on the testing, is there like a percentage of students and staff at each school that will have to be tested every month so that, you know, it's a good random sample? And, yeah, I guess other than, you know, one last thing, just, you know, this extra preparation time of the 10th through the 15th, as well as the transitional period, starting on the 16th, can you say what exactly will happen then that otherwise would not have been happening had schools open on the 10th?

Mayor: Shant, those were really different questions, respectfully. So, we're going to stick to our ground rules. I'm taking your first question. I'm sure we'll be talking more about the transition time and the preparation time in the course of other Q-and-A, your first question on the percentages in each school, Dr. Varma or Dr. Chokshi, do you want to go over that?

Senior Advisor Varma: Sure, this is Jay, I can start. So, what we have worked out is that the size of the sample will vary depending upon the [inaudible] so we're going to be assigning percentages somewhere between ten and 20 percent to be sampled again, dependent upon the size of the school.

Mayor: Thank you. Go ahead.

Moderator: The next is Jen Peltz from the AP.

Mayor: Go ahead, Jen, can you hear us?

Question: Yes. Can you hear me?

Mayor: Yep. Yes. Well, we heard you for a moment. Jen? City Hall calling Jen – can you hear us?

Moderator: We can move on from Jen. We'll get back to her.

Mayor: [Inaudible] Jen. Go ahead.

Moderator: The next is Katie Honan from the Wall Street Journal.

Question: Hi, good morning, everyone. I wanted to ask a question about busing. I know it had been reported that the City had not signed any contracts with yellow school buses and there were concerns, I heard, from teachers and parents given, you know, the different challenges, different remote schooling. One week a student is in school twice a week, one week their in for one day a week. And particularly with students who have special needs and very specific needs, what is the plan there? Will it be up to the bus driver and operators to understand a specific student's schedule? And have you signed any contracts with – I mean, how will kids get to school if we don't know what the deal with the buses is?

Mayor: Thank you, Katie. I'll start and then I'll turn to First Deputy Mayor Dean Fuleihan. Look, the important thing to remember here, we're dealing with an unprecedented situation and, obviously, a substantial number of kids will be all remote. So, that changes the reality of busing. Plus the buses are going to be – have to be different internally for social distancing. So, we have a lot of moving parts here. But we have to do our best to serve every child, every family. And that starts with kids with special needs, unquestionably. We're working with all the companies to get ready as is true in the lead up to every year. And we're going to have to, you know, make adjustments as we go along to get it right, I'm sure of that. But there's been a lot of preparation to get ready to do everything we can do for families. So, Dean, you want to give a couple answers there?

First Deputy Mayor Dean Fuleihan: Yeah. I mean, just to amplify what you said, we're working with all bus companies. They are participating now. We're going through inspections. We're happy to give updates on that and they have their [inaudible] and we're preparing for this, for the blended day operation and we think we're going to be, we'll be fine on that. On contract – so we're finalizing. We're finalizing final terms and conditions, but all bus companies are participating in working together.

Mayor: Go ahead, Richard.

Chancellor Carranza: I'll also add that we are absolutely in our planning, prioritizing students with individual education plans. So, our special education students are obviously a priority for us and we prioritize those routes for those students as well. So, there is a priority that we're working through as well.

Mayor: Thank you, oh, wait, Dean, go ahead.

First Deputy Mayor Fuleihan: And if I may, as is the theme of everything we're talking about here, we're also completely – health and safety will be the primary piece of what happens on buses. So, PPE, cleaning all the protocols, face masks [inaudible].

Mayor: Thank you. Go ahead, Katie.

Question: My second question is about, I guess, a concern from principals over the different staff accommodations and the number of staff required in schools. I know that students who choose one – let's say they choose all remote. They can opt back in, in November, but the staff accommodations are through the end of this calendar year – fiscal – calendar year, sorry, I'm

getting my years mixed up. So, how will that work? You know, if suddenly it works out great and parents want to opt their children in, in November for full in-person learning, but you still have some teachers who have health accommodations through December 31st. How does that look? What the plan there?

Mayor: Yeah, appreciate it, Katie. I'll start, I'll turn to Richard, and turn to Mark. Look, you're raising a really important point, Katie, that this could go any number of ways. And I certainly can say, as a parent, I think you're going to see kids, given our confidence that we all will work together to make things effective and safe, healthy, I think you will see kids that later on say, 'Hey, I'm ready to go back.' Parents are going to be ready to go back. We do have to be planning ahead for that. I think we also are dealing with all of the unknowns out there in the world, including a good unknown, when will there be a vaccine. And when there is a vaccine and everyone is vaccinated, then you're talking about going back on the normal schedule. So, there's a lot of moving parts here. What's crucial is making sure that we have the staff necessary for each school starting with the DOE employees who are – were last year, not in classrooms, but our classroom able, you know, and they're trained and ready and they can go into a classroom. We obviously have a lot of substitute teachers we can draw on and others beyond that. So, continuing to build out that pool, but we would certainly have time when you look ahead to that November date. Go ahead, Richard.

Chancellor Carranza: Thanks, Mr. Mayor. And I'm going to ask somebody, who's actually programmed schools in New York City to weigh in as well. So, this is also one of those least best options that we have because the best option is obviously everybody's back in school and we're off and running, but with changing circumstances, like Katie just mentioned, you just mentioned, students are remote, they decide they want to be in blended. That has a staffing implication, but it also has a programming implication. It also has a geographic, where do you locate that classroom implication as well? So, what we're doing as we speak – and listen, no one's going to disagree that one of the hardest jobs right now in America is to be a principal of a school because you're juggling so many different contingencies from not only the academics to the curriculum, to the planning of when kids arrive, and how do they walk into the building? How do they go through the building? And then also understanding that, I just need more teachers if I'm going to have more children that choose a blended learning model. So, our goal is to be as flexible as possible. And it starts with what the Mayor has talked about.

We've identified everybody with an underlying pedagogical degree that's licensed to teach in the State of New York. And I've been very clear with folks from the beginning that this conversation about in-person learning that, you know, what you did last year you may not be doing this year because all hands are on deck in terms of instruction for our students. We're all educators. That's why we became educators because we love teaching children. So, I think as things start to become a little bit more solid in terms of those numbers and we get closer to that in blended learning we're going to be ready. And if we have to move some folks around, we're going to move some folks around, but it's also why it's so critically important that my colleagues that are joining us here at the table are at the table because that's how we solve a lot of these issues that could be very thorny. Mark –

President Cannizzaro: That's a great question. And that, you know, the challenge of staffing appropriately has been one of the things on our mind for quite some time and it will continue to be. The commitment here, you heard us talk earlier about, you know, working together and when individual schools identify problems, all of us coming together and working it out. And that was really one of the things that I was referring to when I said that we're going to need this team approach. We're going to need, you know, more people in the classrooms than we've had in the past. And Mr. Chancellor, thank you for recognizing the difficulty of being a school principal. It is one of the most difficult jobs in America. I think it was that before the pandemic and it's exponentially grown, but together with our teachers and our support personnel we're going to identify the needs that we have. And then we're going to bring them up to the Chancellor and the Mayor's team, and we're going to, you know, expect, and we know that they've made the commitment to get us the folks that we need. So, although we know this is going to be tenuous and difficult, we're confident that we will have what we need in order to, you know, have teachers – appropriate teachers in front of children on a daily basis.

Mayor: Please –

President Mulgrew: We have a staffing challenge and you've heard the commitment from all of us here. The story of the public school systems across the entire United States and what the federal government has done will go down as one of the biggest national disgraces, as far as I am concerned. Every school system, my work as an AFT vice president, every school system across this country is facing these challenges and the federal government completely failed to act. Yet, everyone at the federal level had no qualms about standing up at press conferences and saying how important it was for the schools to open. Shame on them all. Every single one of them. But the teachers, the parents, responsible elected officials are figuring this out. But let's be clear, the failure of the federal government to act has put us all in a very difficult position, but we're doing what we're supposed to do, and we will keep people safe, but shame on all of them.

Moderator: We're going to go back to Jen Peltz from the AP.

Question: Hi, can you hear me this time?

Mayor: There you go. How you doing, Jen?

Question: Good, thanks. So, Mr. Mayor, I'm reflecting on the press conferences of recent weeks and the message that you've emphasized that months had been spent planning to open school on September 10th, that a lot was happening. And now, obviously, it's being pushed back to prepare more. How confident are you that the City and the teachers and the principals won't just be in the same place in 11 more days after the start. And what happens if the teachers and principals still aren't comfortable on the 21st?

Mayor: Jen, again, let me make clear how much conversation has gone on in recent days to really work through all the individual issues. Everyone here is a very serious professional and serious – those who represent their members are serious about that, but they're also people who are deeply committed to the education of our kids and the needs of our kids and the needs of our families. So, I want to be clear, we're here in unity because we worked through the pieces and

determined that this was a timeline that could address the outstanding concerns. It is a revision that still allows us to keep things moving forward on a tight timeline, but with additional preparation time. It's a good balance. And I'm convinced that everyone's going to move forward. And if we find any challenge along the way, we'll resolve it together. Go ahead.

Executive Director Garrido: Mr. Mayor –

Mayor: Oh yes, please. Henry –

Executive Director Garrido: Sorry, Jen. With respect to – with all the respect to the teachers and principals, I want to also emphasize the important role that school nurses are going to play in this. And also parent coordinators who will probably be the first call that parents will be making to, if they have questions about this. And so, this plan requires all of us, together, to put our best effort forward, not only principals and teachers, but everybody in the school community. If it takes a village to raise a child, it takes a village also to educate a child. And so they're important roles. Imagine you being a school nurse and all the kinds of questions are being asked about testing, about conditions, about symptoms, about children, right? And also just add to this that we represent the contact traces of the Trace Corps which will be also have been monitoring the general population. And the great work that they do and collaboration. So it's important to also think about them because it requires an entire group for us to make this work.

Mayor: Thank you, very important point that Henry is making. Test and Trace Corps is going to be crucial directly connected to our schools, constantly ready to move on anything they have to act on. And Henry, thank you for representing those folks who are really doing crucial, crucial work for this city. Go ahead, Jen.

Question: I guess I would address that same question to the other union leaders there if they're still there. You know, what assurances if any, do they feel they have and can give parents and kids that this isn't just moving the ball down the road?

President Mulgrew: Okay. So this is Michael Mulgrew. So what this agreement does at this point and what you're hearing announced today, it's very clear to every school now. These are the supplies and equipment that each and every school has to have. It's an agreed upon list. Any, we can walk into any school and check to see if it's there. If it's not there, we can get that taken care of immediately. Then there is the list of here are all of the procedures that you need -- have to work out on how they work inside of your school. That's going to be part of the work that we're doing. When the schools go back into place. We could say that you need to do social distancing, right? But how many entrances are you using for your school? Which way are you moving children in and out? When is bathroom time? All of these things have to be worked out in an individual school level. But there is a definitive list of what those things are. And then you have the testing components, which will get out to people. On top of that, we have an instructional plan. The majority of our instruction is still going to be remote. And we are all, which we haven't really spoken about. We're all making sure that we were proud of what happened between March and June, but we want it better. And we know we can do it better because we've learned more than we believe anybody else. We've seen school systems across the country, just buy these for profit educational platforms. They're all collapsing. They're not working. So we have to put all of

that into place. But what the schools will now see is definitively what they need to get done. Now it's our responsibility to help them get there. Certain schools will have greater challenges because of the age of the school and the configurations of the school, but that's why none of us are getting any time off. And we will not get any time off because this is just going to take up constant, constant phone work, getting out to schools, doing different things. You know, the union and the Department of Ed and people from school facilities have been going into all of the schools now for weeks. So all of this now is there for us to move forward. So if there's an individual that has a problem, which we will have. We'll have to address it. But there's no longer a disagreement about what a school needs to have. And that is the key to what we're saying today.

Mayor: That's exactly right. Go ahead Mark.

President Cannizarro: All of the – I agree with all of those points. And then the additional piece about being able to have the teaching staff and the support staff come in on September the eighth and some of them, some of the Henry's folks in already, and be able to coordinate and talk about the logistics and troubleshoot. Because as many things as we prepare for at this table and in our meetings that come up as potential problems, once we are all together and talking through things, we're going to identify more things. And we're also going to identify the solutions for those things. And teachers and principals and assistant principals and all of our educational administrators working together in a building to troubleshoot those things. And then the networks our folks have from building to building where they have discussions about what they're doing and the great ideas that come up. You know, we used to hear the term, the answers are in the room. Well the answers are in the room, but we need to get the people in the room. So that's what we're doing with this agreement. So in addition to the safety, we are getting the people in the room to work out the logistics. And again, this is not going to be perfect, but it's going to be the best we can possibly put forth and we'll get better every day. Thank you.

Mayor: Well said. Go ahead.

Moderator: The next is Kala from PIX.

Question: Hi there. If you guys can – congratulations, first of all, on this monumental deal. I think a lot of teachers have already texted me on how happy they are and how secure they now feel going back to school. Can you tell me the timeline of how this deal came through? And if it was in fact earlier this morning?

Mayor: Kala, I'll keep it broad. Look, we've been talking over certainly the last three, four days, very intensely. And everyone's been in communication with each other. Again, these are longstanding relationships. Even when there's disagreements, there's still a lot of common ground on the bigger goals for this city and for our kids and families. So I'd say the last three, four days were particularly crucial. A lot of the details worked through, especially yesterday. Go ahead.

Question: And if you can give me an update on where we are and hiring nurses, as well as substitute teachers?

Mayor: Sure. I will start and then the Chancellor and perhaps Dean Fuleihan and will join in as well. Look, we, again want to thank Health + Hospitals, our public health system for stepping up. They are doing, start to finish the hiring process for the nurses, the additional nurses we needed so that we could have a nurse in every public school building. That is moving along on time. Again, they're also covering it as part of their budget, which is deeply appreciated. In terms of additional staff, the folks that work for the DOE -- but again, were not in classrooms last year are being organized to go into classrooms this year. And on top of that, we've always used a lot of substitutes. A lot of those folks that we brought into play now. So Chancellor, you want to add?

Chancellor Carranza: So exactly what you said, Mr. Mayor. I think our Deputy Mayor may have some more details, but we're moving aggressively. Our goal obviously has always been that we would have nurses on the 10th. That continues to be the goal that we've set. So understanding this will be the 21st now for blended learning, I have every confidence that will actually happen.

Mayor: Dean Fuleihan, you want to add? You may be on mute. This is an ongoing theme.

Deputy Mayor Fuleihan: Can you hear me?

Mayor: Yes.

Deputy Mayor Fuleihan: Okay. We'll get the specific numbers. But no, we are on track to have the available nurses in every one of our buildings.

Mayor: Great. Thank you.

Moderator: We have time for two more for today. The next is Julia Marsh from the Post.

Question: Hey, good morning, Mr. Mayor, and everyone on the call. I'm wondering if testing of students requires parental consent and what happens if the parents don't give consent for the students to be tested?

Mayor: Yes, it does. If they're under 18 obviously. It does involve parental consent. From what we've seen so far we think we're going to get a very strong, positive response when parents hear, and this is something we all talked about, the importance of the testing being in or near the school building, the importance of parents understanding it's the self swab test. It is the Q-tip not the long apparatus that goes farther up your nose. I did that one. I don't want to do it again. I liked the Q-tip. I think parents will feel much more comfortable with that. It's free. But we'll go about the process of getting those consent forms with the school team, the parent coordinators, everyone will work together on that. And I think we will, if anyone has concerns, we'll literally sit down and have our team sit down and talk it through with them, get them the answers. And I think parents will feel good about that. Go ahead.

Question: Okay. And could you just answer my last, the last part of my question about what happens if they don't give consent?

Mayor: So, Julia, look it's a conceivable reality. I don't think we're going to have that happen as the honest truth, because this is a monthly sample, there's time to reach each child. Not everyone needs to be ready to be sampled on the first round. I think there'll be parents, if they have a concern, a real conversation with them. If they need to talk to a doctor, if they need to talk to someone in their native language, we'll make that happen. So again, I'm going to work from the position that we will get it done. If we really have a parent who's recalcitrant, we're going to have to decide in that case what to do. And that may end up being a situation where the child is not in school. But I don't think we're going to see that.

Moderator: Last question for today. It goes to Emma Fitzsimmons from the New York Times.

Question: Hi, good morning, Mayor. I've wanted to ask, what do you say to parents who had planned their lives around September 10th and who are now scrambling to make new plans? Why wait until this close until the first day of school?

Mayor: Well Emma, I understand I'm a parent. You know, my kids went to New York City public schools from pre-K to 12th grade. So I certainly understand as parents we're trying to plan what it means. First of all, I'm going to state the obvious. For the hundreds of thousands of kids who are going to go all remote, this doesn't change anything. For all the parents whose kids were going to be in a blended learning, it does mean a few more days where they're going to have to figure out some kind of accommodation. But I think what matters here is that we were juggling a lot of important factors. Really perfecting the health and safety approach, making sure that the folks who do the work really felt confident that everything could be ready. Recognizing the complexity of what educators have to prepare. This is something that, you know, our labor partners raised and really were looking for some kind of solution to. We agreed this was the right way to get things done. It is a very modest change. Remember again, on a transitional basis, instruction begins on Wednesday the 16th, and that'll be three days of all remote instruction, transitionally. And then again, the full blended learning begins on the 21st. So it is a change. It's not -- I do empathize with parents, but it's a very modest change to resolve outstanding issues. So we could all move forward together. Go ahead Emma.

Question: And can you talk a little bit more about why now, why this morning? I know you said you've had discussions in the last three or four days. But we had a story run this morning about how you'd been so determined to stick to this timeline. So why did your thinking change?

Mayor: Well, look, first of all, it's very important to have a goal and something that gets everyone working towards that goal. And certainly in terms of moving our school system forward, all that work that was done over the summer about custodial services, school facilities, all the work that's been done at the Department of Education headquarters. The goal was the goal that was historically set. Everyone knew that the Thursday after Labor Day was the time. And so everyone was working towards that. And that was the right thing to do. But we heard real concerns raised by our labor partners. And we needed to work these through collaboratively. And it didn't happen overnight. Like every other negotiation, it doesn't happen overnight. But when we saw a clear path forward, the moment we saw it, the moment we agreed on it, that was the time to announce it.

Executive Director Garrido: I think for all of us, it was important to open the schools system, but it was more important to get it right. And to get it to the point where, you know, children, parents, educators, and support staff are all in sync. And so the preparation for the schools, the extra time that has been allotted, it's critical to get the entire school community prepared for this very monumental task. So I think to be fair, this has been an ongoing discussion among all of us. Whether the talks intensified in terms of fives in the last few days, but it's been going on for quite some time now.

President Mulgrew: And I would just add in that we wouldn't be here today, if the Mayor by listening – the Mayor is really engaged in this process, in this whole conversation about how do we get to the place where we can say, because you and I have been discussing this – where we can say we have the most aggressive policies and the greatest safeguards of any school system in the United States. How do we get there? And also do it in a way that the schools will actually be prepared. And if we need to push a little bit, it's not enough where it will really affect the children of New York in the way that they were affected when we had the complete shutdown. And that has been a goal over the last few days. And I give the Mayor a lot of credit for saying let's -- if that's going to be our goal, let's try to figure it out. And that's why we're here today. We will have a stronger instructional program because of what we're about to do over the next two weeks. We will have more schools, much better prepared to deal with all of the safety aspects that they're going to have to deal with. This is not an easy task and challenge that we are, we all know we're facing. But we also know that our members take that pride in being there on behalf of the families that they serve and their children. But this is not easy to do. And I give the Mayor great credit for really listening and trying to figure out how to get there. And then changing the goal to make it even a better thing. When you saw it was a possibility, you said, let's try to make it happen.

Mayor: Thank you, Michael. And thank you. I want to thank Michael, Henry, Mark, everyone who worked – look again, lots of conversations where real concerns are raised. I just want to make this clear to all the people in the city. Real concerns were raised. You know, I'm glad we don't have every single one of our conversations live-streamed. But sometimes there's choice language, but if they were live-streamed, what would be clear and I think what people would be moved by and impressed by is that the concerns raised by our labor partners. They were not parochial. They were about the health and safety of all. They were about how to get the best quality education for kids. They're about respecting the professionals who are trying to navigate absolutely unprecedented things. I want to emphasize that an earlier point Michael made. We did not have the support of our federal government in this or any other part of this process. We never got testing. We never got a stimulus. You name it, we didn't get it. We were all left in a tough spot. And when you're in a tough spot, of course there's tensions, there's challenges. But what increasingly happened, particularly in the course of the last week was folks said, look, let's talk piece by piece about what it would take to get this right And really see through each other's eyes what we need to get done. How to keep each person that does this precious work, safe. How to make sure that people can go into the schools and feel prepared because we're asking them to do something that's like conducting a symphony every day, right? I feel for the principals, the educators, the staff, everyone's going to have to do a whole lot of things differently and creatively. But the point that was made also by Michael, about the alternative that we've seen in so many other places where unfortunately kids were left in a situation where they weren't going

to get the kind of education they deserve. Parents were left a situation, they could see with their own eyes, that their kids were not getting a quality education. We won't allow that here. We have too much reverence for public education in this city to ever let it fall apart and be less than it should be. This is why New York City is great. I keep saying the future of this city is based on the New York City public schools. I think the future of America is based on public schools all over this country. So for the nation's largest school system to come together in unity and say, we are going to get it right. And it won't always be easy and there'll be tough moments along the way, but we're going to get it right. That's a statement. This is one of those only in New York moments. People, all different viewpoints, all different backgrounds, but we're coming together in common cause for our kids.

And again, I'll close with a point that I try to make every day because it's worth saying every day. The reason we can make this announcement today is because of the people in New York City who every day have been fighting back this disease. Now let's be inspired by this moment of unity and go farther fighting back this disease because we can go farther. And we can make the city safer and together we're going to move forward and particularly move forward on behalf of our kids. Thank you, everybody.

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