



THE CITY OF NEW YORK
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**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO, CHANCELLOR CARRANZA ANNOUNCE
REFORMS TO THE SPECIALIZED HIGH SCHOOL ADMISSIONS PROCESS**

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Now, there is a leader of the future everybody.

[Applause]

Mariama, I want to really thank you. You spoke very powerfully, and I think that says it all. You can tell immediately with her strong voice and her intellect what immense potential Mariama has and what if that day she didn't get that book for test prep, and how many people like you never get that book. Just like you said, how many wonderful kids never get to experience the opportunity they deserve because of a system that's broken. So I want to see a lot more Mariama's going to our specialized high schools, thank you.

[Applause]

This is an issue that really brings out strong feelings in all of us, because we want the best for our children. We have such hope for our children. We love them, we cherish them, I talk to parents all over the city, I talk to grandparents all over the city. Number one thing they think about is helping their children get the best education possible. It's our job to make sure that's a reality. Can't do it with the status quo this status quo is broken. We have to make a major change, we have to make sure the very best high schools are open to every New Yorker, every kind of New Yorker, they need to look like New York City.

[Applause]

I want to thank all the elected officials who are here with us, because I know this is something they're passionate about. You're going to hear from some of them in a moment, but I want to thank some of the others including some who are going to have a vote on this, and be able to help determine the destiny of children going forward with their leadership. I want to thank Senator Kevin Parker.

[Applause]

Assemblyman Michael Blake –

[Applause]

Assemblyman Walter Mosely–

[Applause]

And Councilmembers Rafael Espinal –

[Applause]

Laurie Cumbo –

[Applause]

Robert Cornegy –

[Applause]

Brad Lander and Ydanis Rodriguez, and you're going to hear from some of the others in just a moment. Now, I want to thank everyone also at this school for hosting us. Let's thank the principal, assistant principal here, let's thank everyone at this school.

[Applause]

Special thank you and shout out to a trailblazer hiding behind me, Dr. Una Clarke. She's hiding behind me because she's so shy. Let me ask everyone. Do we believe in the status quo?

Audience: No.

Mayor: Do we believe that children should be kept from the best education possible?

Audience: No.

Mayor: Do we believe opportunity should be only for some, not for others?

Audience: No.

Mayor: Time for change?

Audience: Yes.

Mayor: Time for change?

Audience: Yes.

Mayor: Time for change?

Audience: Yes.

Mayor: I believe you. I also see I did not get him before, Assembly member Felix Ortiz, thank you so much for joining us as well.

[Applause]

Here's what's been happening, it's what Mariama is talking about. Basically for thousands and thousands of students and neighborhoods all over New York City, the message has been these specialized schools aren't for you. That's really what they've been receiving. In lots of neighborhoods all over the city they've been told in effect, this is not your thing. And the amount of talent that has gone missing because of that is unbelievable, because talent takes many forms. The people are going to be great leaders, great thinkers, great creative presences. It take many, many forms. But you know what doesn't allow us to capture all of that, and understand all of that? A single standardized test could never, ever capture all that talent.

[Applause]

So, the solution is simple, the test has to go.

[Applause]

I am going to say it again. The test has to go.

[Applause]

I want to give you a few – I'm sorry I heard echo.

Audience: The test has to go.

Mayor: The test has to go?

Audience: The test has to go, the test has to go, the test has to go, the test has to go, the test has to go.

Mayor: Alright, I agree the test has to go. Let me give you a couple of examples about how ZIP code is limiting destiny right now in New York City. Bronx Science, it's called Bronx Science – only 14 percent of the students come from the Bronx. Brooklyn Tech, here we are in Central Brooklyn – this a shameful statistic, Brooklyn Tech one of the jewels in the crown of public education in this city, 3.4 percent of the students at Brooklyn Tech come from Central Brooklyn. I mentioned the one that drives me the craziest – Stuyvesant admitted almost 1,000 students last time, 10 were African Americans – one percent, one percent. Under 30 were Latino, three percent in a city that is majority African American, and Latino. It just doesn't make sense, and it

doesn't make sense because of what these schools mean. They are the proving ground for our future leaders. Unless we believe our leaders should only come from certain communities, we cannot have our most prestigious schools available only to some and not to others. So, we have to fix this, we have a plan to do it, and I am going to speak, and the Chancellor is going to speak. And then we're going to hear from the sponsor of the legislation that will make all this possible, Assemblyman Barron. But let me tell you, we're going to act right now, with the way that we can act with the tools we have right now, with the discovery program. We are going to use that program in a new and aggressive way to make sure that 20 percent of the seats in our specialized schools immediately go to kids from disadvantaged communities.

[Applause]

But that is only the first step. We need Albany to act, we need Albany to act and pass the legislation that will actually create fairness and get away from this one broken test, and actually look at something a lot of us up here really, really believe in, we call it multiple measures. Looking at the child through the prism of their on-going accomplishment not just how they did on one three hour test. I want to emphasize this everyone, one time only, three hour test, you walk in you take it, you walk out. It doesn't matter if you're having a good day, a bad day, if you're sick, if you're not sick. You get one shot only for three hours that determines your future. Nothing could be more insane than that. And we don't want to make decisions that way. Our new plan, this legalization when it is fully implemented and when it brings us a fair way of admitting students. We'll result in specialized schools in which 45 percent of all students will be black and Latino.

[Applause]

Now, I am just going to jump ahead, because I know what I am going to hear. I can already write the script. Somehow these wonderful prestigious schools won't be the same; they won't be just as good if they look different. By the way anyone who is thinking that, that's an un-American thought, that's an unfair thought that thought does not conform to the values of New York City. Because beauty, and intelligence, and strength comes in all shapes and sizes, all colors, all genders. So, I want to actually present to you that not only is that a false accusation, and we will hear it momentarily I guarantee it. It is actually patently incorrect. These schools will get better when they reflect all of New York City.

[Applause]

Because so much talent is being locked out right now. So much talent is being missed because of a broken system we will actually get a student body that not only looks like New York City but brings a much richer talent base that actually has proven their talent, not just in one room, in one test, in one day, but over years, and years. And brings that creatively, and brings that drive, and brings that ability, and that's going to lift all boats. So we could not be more excited. And some will say today, and they are right. Justice has been delayed, but that does not mean justice has to be denied. We can fix this, and we intend to in New York City.

[Applause]

A few words in Spanish.

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

It's time to get rid of this test and create a brighter future for our children.

[Applause]

With that I am going to now introduce someone who has devoted his entire life to making sure every child had educational opportunity, every child gets equity and excellence, our Chancellor Richard Carranza.

[Applause]

Schools Chancellor Richard Carranza: So, good afternoon.

Audience: Good afternoon.

Chancellor Carranza: That's my Mayor!

[Applause]

Thank you for your courageous leadership, Mr. Mayor. I want to also thank everyone that is here today, all of our elected officials, our parents, our students, my fellow educators. Thank you for being here. I also want to thank the staff here at J.H.S. 292 for opening their building this Sunday. And I want to particularly thank Principal Edwards –

[Applause]

Who had an engagement with his family and made arrangements to be here. And our AP Mitchell, thank you for being here as well.

[Applause]

And Mr. Mayor, I want to point out one student from this school who is a sixth grader, Alexa, who is sitting right in the front, who is on her way to becoming a doctor.

[Applause]

And I understand is excited about these changes because that will allow her to actually realize her dream. So, for everyone that is here – I want to thank you for being here. A couple of words – from my experience as an educator, I've spent over a decade – almost a decade in the classroom as an educator in a school that was very similar to the school that we're standing in now.

And what I found that was incontrovertible over those ten years was that very often the students with the grit, the students with the tenacity, the students with leadership skills weren't always my best test-takers yet when given the opportunity to demonstrate those skills, when given the opportunity to actually act and be the leaders that they could be, they blossomed. And they didn't need a test, they didn't need three hours, they didn't need four hours. What they needed was support.

What they needed was an opportunity. They never asked to get rid of the bootstraps, they only asked to have the bootstraps so that they can build themselves up.

[Applause]

So what we are proposing today is not to eliminate bootstraps. What we're proposing today is not to eliminate the boots. What we're saying is that there are ways to have multiple pathways to show their brilliance, to show their excellence. And as I've travelled across this incredible city, I'm probably the newest New Yorker in the room –

[Laughter]

But I will tell you every corner of our city, whether it's Brooklyn or the Bronx or Staten Island or Manhattan or Queens –

[Laughter]

I had to give it that dramatic pause, for Queens.

[Laughter]

But everywhere I've been whether they're proud of their borough, everyone has told me they're proud to be New Yorkers. So, how can it be in the most diverse city, not in America in the world, the world-class city that is New York City, the city which on my way here I looked across and saw the Statue of Liberty – how could it be, and I've asked lots of questions, how it could be that we have a system that denies the full array of the beautiful students in our system an opportunity to avail themselves of these kinds of educational experiences.

Because I'm a firm believer, Sir, that either students are biologically, physiologically, or genealogically incapable of accessing these programs or it's the system that is an obstacle to these students. And, do you join me in saying it's the system not the student?

Audience: It's the system not the students.

Chancellor Carranza: Is it the system, not the student?

Audience: It's the system not the students.

Chancellor Carranza: So we must change that today and that's why we're gathered together.

[Applause]

So, to all of our students, to all of those that may be concerned about moving the status quo to a place that is a new status quo, where it is truly open to all of our students, I say to you this – work with us, join the movement, be on the right side of history where you open the doors, where you create more bootstraps not eliminate bootstraps, where you help our communities actually access and become part of the full-array of the beautiful opportunities that we have in the City of New York.

I ask you to work with us and our commitment is to work with you but rest assured the time has come. We are an enlightened people in New York City and our time has come. And I'm very honored to be here as the Chancellor, Mr. Mayor, that will work with you and our elected officials, our union presidents to make this happen.

Audience: And the community.

Chancellor Carranza: And the community.

[Applause]

Based and grounded in the community.

[Chancellor Carranza speaks in Spanish]

[Applause]

Mayor: First, to the voice of wisdom about the importance of the community being involved – let me make it even sharper. This legislation won't pass in Albany unless the community is involved. So, if you believe in it, you're going to have to fight for it.

Are you ready to fight for it?

[Applause]

Audience: Yes!

Mayor: We're going to need all of you. It's going to be a team effort and I want to introduce the sponsor of the legislation, before I do just a special thank you and shout out because someone is here who is another great example of what happens when you actually provide opportunity. He is a proud son of East New York. He ended up going to some institutions – Harvard, Yale, all those kinds of places. And for four years, he was our Deputy Mayor and helped to make pre-K a reality in this city. Richard Buery, where are you? Thank you so much. There he is.

[Applause]

So, that's what happens when you give someone opportunity. Great things happen for all of us. Now, I got to tell you, someone has to lead the way and blaze the trail and this can only happen, these changes can only happen with legislation through the State legislature. And I want to give Assemblyman Charles Barron credit. He saw this as the priority it needs to be. He put forward a vision of how to right what is wrong.

[Applause]

And he knew that this would take a lot of work that change always takes a lot of work but he believed it would happen and it must happen. And I want to thank him for his leadership. Assemblyman Charles Barron.

[Applause]

[...]

Mayor: As we turn to media questions on this topic, I just want to echo that last sentence from David how widespread brilliance is. We all see it every day in this community and so many others. We see the brilliance of our young people. Let's give them all opportunity. That's what this is about.

[Applause]

Okay media. Yes?

Question: One way to push Albany that has been successful on some issues in the past is for the City to do it itself basically. So, we know there were five of the eight schools, the newer schools are under State control. You had said on Brian Lehrer a few months ago that you were going to sort of look into what the options would be like. Why not essentially force Albany's hand in what will be an uphill political battle by changing admissions of five of eight, showing that it can work, and saying okay now you guys can do the other three?

Mayor: I appreciate the question and I appreciate the logic of the question but it goes back to the fact that we think the law right now isn't clear on this issue and the best way to win is to go change the law. It's as simple as that.

When we're confronted with a situation like this, we recognize that the best way to get the result we want for our kids and make sure it sticks is to get the law changed and I think now we have a moment in history where that could happen. I think this is the other part of the equation – you know, even a few years ago there were strong voices talking about the lack of diversity in some our schools. But that has now become a crescendo. It's become so intense in this city, this demand for fairness. We have a new Chancellor. I'm starting a new term as Mayor. We have a lot of changes happening in Albany. I think the stars have aligned for us to get the optimum outcome which is a change in the law.

[Applause]

Question: A few alumni associations, Stuyvesant and Brooklyn Tech in particular, put out statements saying that they oppose the plan and on Facebook groups, there are a lot of people commenting – alumni Facebook groups from those schools – saying that this policy or proposal strikes them as anti-Asian since the overwhelming majority of students at some of those schools are Asian.

Mayor: I mean nothing could be further from the truth. And look, I think if people want to argue on the merits, argue it on the merits. But don't try and divide us because this is not anti-anyone. This is pro-opportunity. And by the way, I mentioned and Helen Rosenthal made the point too that we want to see kids from Helen's community, that she comes from, from my community who are not great test-takers because a lot of us aren't great test-takers.

We want to see every kind of child have opportunity and that that opportunity is based on the totality of their work. We're talking about looking at years of academic work rather than one three-hour test. And that's good for people across the spectrum.

So, I think that that critique is wrong and unfair. We want to have opportunity for everyone but the current reality – it's clearly exclusionary. You can see it on its face. How can Stuyvesant have almost 1,000 kids come in each year and only ten are African-American. We wouldn't accept that in any other institution. That has to change.

Question: Mr. Mayor, one of the other issues that some of the alumni organizations raised is this – the things that you will be, the students who go to public schools if you phase out the test will have an opportunity to get into schools but there are other students who go to private schools, yeshivas, Catholic schools [inaudible] other private schools – what accommodations will be made for them to get into the specialized schools under your [inaudible] –

Mayor: It's a great question. Now, I always will start and there's the Chancellor, the Deputy Chancellor can help me but let me just phrase because I think Marcia is asking a very important question.

I don't know the percentage of kids overall in the specialize schools who come from non-public schools. So, I will get educated with this answer too. But obviously we want to create fairness for everyone. We don't believe in a single test for anyone. It doesn't matter what kind of school you come from, we don't think a single test is a good way to make a decision that will determine the rest of your life.

So in terms of – Chancellor, Deputy Chancellor? Who's got it? Deputy Chancellor. Deputy Chancellor Josh Wallack.

[Applause]

Deputy Chancellor Josh Wallack, Department of Education: Thanks. The way the plan works is that when it's fully implemented, we'll admit roughly the top seven percent of middle school students from across the city from each middle school and that will leave some space in

the specialized high schools – about seven percent of the incoming class – for other qualified students coming from independent and non-public schools. And the law accommodates that and ensures that they have very high academic performance and then they'll be selected from that pool based on a lottery. So, a fair way of selecting high-performing students from those schools so there are opportunities for students from all over the city to participate in the specialized high schools.

Mayor: Thank you.

Question: [Inaudible] high-performing –

Deputy Chancellor Wallack: Yes those –

Question: Or could you be in the bottom percentage of your class and still be in the lottery?

Deputy Chancellor Wallack: No, those students would have a minimum grade-point average of 3.7 so that's an A-minus average. And then those students would be put into a pool and we would do a lottery out of that pool.

Question: So, the same criteria would be for public school students too. They would have to a 3.7 grade-point average to get in to the schools as well?

Deputy Chancellor Wallack: Public schools students operate according to the plan that we laid out and that was laid out in the legislation which is that we're going to essentially put together a combined ranking of students based on their rank within middle school on their core course grades and the State exam results. We will do the ranking and then we will admit based on that rank in the first year, the top three percent; second year, top five percent; third year, top seven percent. Thanks.

Mayor: [Inaudible]

Question: Thanks for explaining. There are also a lot of parents and alumni and others that are concerned that unfortunately there's a very wide gap in the preparation of students in some city middle schools versus other city middle schools and you'll be doing a disservice to the students who could be coming very unprepared, doing a disservice to the school and doing a disservice to the students if they struggle –

Mayor: Yes.

Question: Can you talk about that?

Mayor: Absolutely. And I disagree with the assumption – not your assumption but I know people are saying that. That's what I referenced in my remarks. So, I'll start and if Chancellor, Deputy Chancellor wants to jump in?

That's a red herring if ever there was one. If you talk about the top kids in each middle school, you're talking about kids who are talented and have proven it over years. As the Deputy Chancellor said, there is a second factor which is a universal one. Every student takes the State exams in math and in English. It's not a – right now it's specialized high school – it's a few, it's a small number of students in the scheme of things that take that test and it's one test and it's a separate reality.

But everyone takes the State exams so that give you a universal measure. So you're combining the two. It's two standards that have to be met but I want to tell you having visited middle schools all over the city, there are brilliant kids in every one of our middle schools ready for this opportunity.

[Applause]

Question: [Inaudible] about the Asian students who have been really successful under the current system, numbers wise. The issue is also that a lot of them are eligible for school lunch and so it's also a question about is there any chance under this 20 percent with Discovery that there's going to be less seats for lower income Asian students?

Mayor: Lower income Asian students will also benefit from the Discovery Program being expanded, there's no question about that. Other questions on this. Media questions. I just want to make sure we're doing media, media, media. I think I've met you before.

Question: As you said, ten kids from this school have been accepted for next year. If the three percent rule was in place next year, it would have only been seven and three kids from this school who are now getting their tickets punched would be excluded. So, there will be winners and losers in this. In a school like Mark Twain which has a lot of smart kids with a cap at seven percent, isn't the concept as the young lady said, get a Barron's book. Obviously your son prepared somehow, he did well, he got into Brooklyn Tech, he got into Yale – isn't it preparing every kid, getting every kid a Barron's book and not excluding kids who are otherwise qualified. The kids who are in the top eight percent at Mark Twain would be shut out.

Mayor: I'll start and then others can join in. First of all, I don't want to assume how the formula plays out because as you heard it's a combination of grades and the State exams and it phases in over several years. So, the real question is when it's all phased in, what will it look like in a variety of schools? And that's some of the modelling that has been done by the Department of Education and we believe it will be much more representative. But the fact is we need to ensure that there is not an artificial barrier to admission which is what exists now.

The Chancellor put it very sharply, unless we argue that somehow these kids are inherently not qualified, there's something else wrong and we all know up here there is something else wrong. The test has created a de facto barrier to admission. It has been the x-factor, it's been the reason why so many good kids didn't get in and we want to right that wrong.

We're also going to keep expanding high-quality options and I have in our conversations I have directed the Chancellor to come back with a plan to allow for more high-quality high school

seats going forward whether it be in specialized schools or other types of highly effective high schools because we want to keep expanding all of the options.

These eight are not the only great schools in this city. By the way, my daughter also got into Brooklyn Tech and rejected it and went to Beacon because she thought it was the better school for her and it turned out to be great for her. There's a lot of other great high schools.

We want to make sure there are as many specialized seats as possible. We also want to strengthen a lot of those other great programs and that's what the Chancellor will be working on.

Question: [Inaudible] a stat. You said that in the case of Bronx Science, 14 percent of the students are from the Bronx and in the case of Brooklyn Tech 3.4 percent from Central Brooklyn.

Mayor: Central Brooklyn.

Question: Do we have the number for all of Brooklyn –

Mayor: We can get you that. I don't have that handy. But we'll get you that for sure. If you just follow up with the Deputy Chancellor afterwards. And I just want to say to everyone, in addition to the fine work of the Assemblymember, Assemblyman Barron and his team – he does a great job of giving to all his teammates. I've noticed that. I appreciate you for that.

I want to say that Deputy Chancellor Josh Wallack has done a lot of the important work here to bring this proposal forward.

[Applause]

So, I'm starting to – if you're media, I want, but let's do media questions. Anyone media who hasn't gone?

Question: Christina with Chalkbeat. You've had four years to propose or to push more strongly for these changes. And you mentioned in your comments some people say is this just delayed and they're right. Can you talk about – you also talked about the stars aligning a little bit. So why now and what's different?

Mayor: Because a lot of things have changed. If you go back to my platform in 2013, I called for this change and it does not shock you, I'm sure, that in the different dynamics we've had with Albany it did not look particularly possible. Also, we had some other big fights we had to fight and win.

We had to fight for pre-K, we had to fight for mayoral control of education, among others. But the stars have now aligned. I got a new mandate from the voters. I got a new Chancellor who is focused on social justice, to his credit, and this is one of his number one priorities.

The movement calling for greater diversity in our schools has grown intensely in the last few years. This is now a front-page issue and that helps. So that is all changing and then I would say Senator Parker might agree with me that we project certain changes in Albany in the next few months that could really change the whole debate and when Senator Parker is in the majority, this is going to get a whole different kind of hearing. So, those are the reasons. The moment is right for it. Marcia?

Question: Mr. Mayor, I just wondered if the weirdness that's going on in Albany right now in the Senate given the fact that there's this 31-31 split may delay the change until after November.

Mayor: Look, we – we're hoping against hope for an opening right now because there's a lot of support in the Assembly and again the time is right in terms of the public debate. But we're also aware of the fact that by putting this bill front and center so intensely right now, it's going to start a big discussion in this city and in Albany. If we can't get it done now, it sets us up very well to go get it done in the next session.

Question: [Inaudible] will you start like considering hardships? Or how holistically look at students when they're applying –

Mayor: How?

Question: How holistically will you look at students, look at hardships [inaudible] gone through besides their 3.7 GPA?

Mayor: Well again I'll start and Chancellor, Deputy Chancellor – I mean we think this is a much more universal and fair approach. So in terms of recognizing hardship I think inherently this does that. If you say we've got 600 middle schools, and right now only about half of them are represented in our specialized schools, by definition – it gets back to the point that Michael was making, if you give the very best kids in each of those middle schools that are left out right now, you're going to bring in a ton of talent, real world talent, but also a lot of kids who by definition are not coming from families that are advantaged. But again you also have the state exams, a universal measure, as a balance factor.

So, I think that's a way of addressing economic reality, demographic reality, hardship, the whole – the whole set of questions with one unified approach. And it is the polar opposite from a one-time only test that only a few people even take to begin with.

Mayor: Yes?

Question: I think this is probably one of the more politically controversial education –

Mayor: You would be correct.

Question: – you've had, having being along for the ride. I guess I'm wondering is this sort of like – we've been talking a lot around the semantics around segregation –

Mayor: Yes.

Question: I mean is this going to be sort of a tip of the iceberg moment? Obviously I know your Chancellor is highly interested in having this conversation taking action. How much are the next few months figuring out if we're – if you're going to get this through Albany and if it's going to work? How much is that going to show you about how far basically you can push the city on segregation?

Mayor: I appreciate the question. It's a very insightful question, but I want to say it's – I don't think this is the measure of how far this city can go. This city is ready to go very far. This city has been moving without Albany. Look at what Helen and so many other good people did in District 3. Look at what's happening in District 1. Those models are going to go city-wide sooner rather than later. And I've said that publically. Now we have the proof.

But, we cannot ignore the jewels in the crown. How can you have fairness and diversity if your very best schools are not in the equation? So I see this as a leading edge, not something that means if we get stalled at any point in Albany we're all going to sit around waiting. No, we're going to fight on a lot of fronts.

But this is – if you can fix this problem you can fix anything. This – these are the most respected, most prestigious schools in the city. We will not allow them to be agents of unfairness. Changing them sends a message that everything is going to change.

Grace?

Question: Back to the middle school questions. Right now there are – there is competitive admissions to middle school, so you have certain middle schools around the city that are considered academic powerhouses. I can only imagine the reaction in some of those to this policy, because you're essentially saying a school that has a lot of high performing academic students is only going to have seven percent of their student body go to these schools. What's your message to those parents who say I have a high achiever and now my child is going to be shutout if they're not the top of the top of the top?

Mayor: I would tell them don't believe the hype about how these schools work. And it's – there are extraordinary kids in so many of our high schools too who are on their way to great things. And a lot of our high schools are rapidly getting stronger. This is a passion for all of us. We never saw it – and I want to be fair, no one in this row here every said oh, you know, there's eight great high schools and everything else is just lagging behind.

No. I used the example of my daughter. She turned down a specialized school because she thought Beacon was a better school for her. There's a lot of other schools that perform wonderfully and suit what kids need, and turnout a ton of high quality, well-educated kids. We want to keep lifting them up.

So, as I said, we're going to look at the option of expanding some of these specialized schools, but we're also going to look to improve and expand a lot of the other high quality programs.

Most – let’s be really clear, and we can get you the facts, most kids never take the test. And then the ones that take the test, most don’t get in. It’s only 5,000 seats a year. But we have like 80,000 high school students a year. But a lot of the other 75,000 are doing great things.

So it’s not like there’s only one way to succeed. We need – but we do need to keep improving all the other great options, and telling parents about them. I have never accused the DOE of communicating well with parents. Can I get an amen?

Audience: Amen.

Mayor: Thank you. This is something this Chancellor and I talked about from the very first conversation. Part of his mandate is to change entirely how we have a dialogue with parents, including to tell them about a lot of options that the status quo assumptions miss. There’s a lot of great schools, and a lot that are getting greater. Okay last call on questions on this topic? Let’s go here.

Question: According to your own projections even with these changes the schools will still be underrepresenting black and Hispanic students. They would be at 45 percent where as they comprise about 68 percent of the overall student population. Is that acceptable?

Mayor: I think to go from nine percent kids in our specialized schools who represent the majority of this city to 45 percent in the course of about three years, you know what, that is serious fundamental social change. I’m quite clear about that. So yes, that’s a huge step forward.

Question: Just because we’re not sure that this bill will pass, but in the meantime there’s this discovery program –

Mayor: Yes.

Question: -- expansion. I want to ask you about that. So if you’re going to have 1,000 seats set aside for students who were just under the cutoff –

Mayor: Right.

Question: You’re going to be, presumably, reducing the number of students by about 1,000 who were above the cutoff. So what do you say to the parents and the students who feel like they were just kind of skipped over, and they made a good score?

Mayor: I’m going to get the Deputy Chancellor to come up and talk about some of the specific thinking, but I’ll tell you what I think. The test is arbitrary and capricious to begin with. Let’s go to the root cause. It doesn’t make sense. It’s something we will have for a little bit longer, but if the Assemblyman’s legislation passes, and we do the same in the Senate, it will be a thing of the past.

And by the way, in the op-ed – I want to really remind you this line, there is no great college in America that chooses its students based on a single standardized test. Harvard doesn’t do it. Yale

doesn't do it. You go down the whole list. There is no graduate school in America that chooses their students based on a single standardized test. The best schools in America would laugh at you if you told them why don't you just choose your students with a single test. They would be the first to say that would miss a huge swath of talent. So it's broken. So saying, well if some people feel that something wasn't what they wanted, but the whole system is broken to begin with, I think we have to go to the root cause.

I also think it's not fair to anyone that so many kids are left out. And the kids who then are going to those schools do not have the benefit of learning with other people who don't look like them, and learning from this whole city.

So, what discovery is going to do is it's going to give us a chance to take kids who just missed, give them a little more support, and get them in. And I think that's good for everyone.

Say again?

Hold on one second. Did I cover it or do you need to add anything? You're good? Okay. Hold on I think there was one in the back too. Did you – was that media question in the back. No? Okay, and what was that – where? Where? Are you a member of the media? No. We need members of the media though. Let's see – you are a member of the media? You look so young I thought you were a student here.

Question: [Inaudible] sure that the thousand students who are above the cutoff aren't say black or Hispanic low-income students now being – you know not getting in –

Mayor: I'm going to try this. I'm going – let me answer that first. I'm going to try, and you'll watch me Josh and correct me if I'm wrong. The odds that you're going to exclude a black or Latino student in that equation are nine out of 100. So that's not – I'm not saying it doesn't matter to the people. I'm a parent, I feel for every parent. Every parent wants the best for their kids. But that's not going to happen very often is the blunt answer.

And the inequity is not acceptable. And what we have to do, and this is on us, all of us. And I know, you know, Michael is going to join us in this, we've talked a lot about the whole concept of we need parents to have confidence in a whole range of high schools. We've got to do the work to not only show them, but to provide the proof that more and more great high schools exist of every kind.

But no, I don't fear what you're raising. Yes?

Question: [Inaudible] question or just in general, are you going to expand the [inaudible] in middle schools in general?

Mayor: Are we going to what?

Question: Expand kids [inaudible] programs in general because [inaudible] me as an example, I went to [inaudible] program and that was a funnel to go to Brooklyn [inaudible]

Mayor: I'll only start and the Chancellor can correct me or add. We believe that we're continuing, of course, the programs we have now. But we believe there is a higher calling and a higher ideal which is to make all schools schools that can provide an excellent education for talented kids. And to give more and more kids a chance to fulfill their potential across the school system. That's what the Equity and Excellence model is. And so, I think you're going to see as that is implemented more that without – without having to create new kinds of seats we can reach a lot more kids.

Chancellor Carranza: So to add to what our Mayor has said, we have to fundamentally shift our mindset from the mindset that says there is a small portfolio of schools that everyone should go to. And if you don't go to those schools then you're not receiving a great education. Let me tell you, I've been to over 72 schools in the time I've been here. I've been to high schools, I've been to middle schools, I've been to elementary schools. I've seen some incredible teaching. Not one of those schools has been one of these specialized high schools – not that I'm not going to go and visit.

But there's some incredible things happening in our schools. Right here in Brooklyn, incredible schools that people would say oh you may not want to think about that school. Yet when I've gone to those schools, incredible teaching, incredible passion, incredible opportunities.

So our goal, and remember we are not the sum total of eight specialized schools in the New York City public school system, our goal is to make sure that you can go to any middle school and have an incredible opportunity to go to a specialized school if that's what you want to do. But more than that, if you're a middle school student you have a wide array of opportunities in this incredible school system to do lots of great things. And it doesn't have to be in a specialized school.

But if you avail yourself of that opportunity, we want to make sure that we're making it fair. We want to make sure that we're making it robust. We want to make sure that we're removing systemic barriers to you being able to do that.

But again the message is there are schools across this city that are great schools and we want a great school in every neighborhood because New Yorkers deserve that in our school system.

[Applause]

Mayor: Alright we are going to – thank you Chancellor. We are going to see if media have any other topics you want to cover for a couple of minutes, we have a few more minutes. Anything else you want to go over?

Question: [Inaudible] topic –

Mayor: You can stay on this topic if you prefer.

Question: Have you consulted any of the principals at the specialized high schools? Have they been able to weigh in on this at all?

Mayor: Deputy Chancellor, I think you have been in conversation – we don't need to go into detail. The answer is yes. Yes. And the Deputy Chancellor can talk to you more about that.

Okay, last call going – media question? Okay coming to you after him.

Question: Another stars aligning question. We talked about stars aligning on the bill. With carving out the 20 percent of seats, how did the stars align for that to happen? And how does the City have the authority to do that without going to Albany?

Mayor: So, part of how the stars aligned is we kept looking at the equation trying to figure what we could do on our own. And recognize that this was actually we could do a lot more with. And one of the things that is real in government is you can stare at a problem or an equation for a while and not have that creative thought of wait a minute, here's another way we can do things.

We realized there was more we could do with discovery. And we're absolutely convinced, and our Law Department is absolutely convinced, that it is fully within our power. And that 20 percent number is what we think is the number we can reach.

Question: [Inaudible] new plan will bring to Asian students? Both advantages and disadvantages?

Mayor: It – look this plan is going to create fairness and I would say there are students who are Asian, there are students who are white, there are students who are black, there are students who are Latino who don't take tests well or don't have the opportunity to have their family pay for test prep. A lot of good Asian students are being left out right now because of that single test system.

When we create fairness, looking at the whole body of academic work of a student, there's going to be many, many opportunities, not only in the specialized schools, but in other great high schools. So we think it's fairer for everyone ultimately.

Okay last call, if there's any other questions. Going once, twice. Thank you everyone.

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