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**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO AND CHANCELLOR CARRANZA TOUR
BRONX COLLABORATIVE HIGH SCHOOL**

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Thank you so much. Okay. Thank you. Well said, well said I want to thank Lude Bonnet for really laying out beautifully, what so much – actually, I'm distanced. So I'm going to take this off. What so much of the conversation was in the room with the parents about the power of being in a New York City public school. And what it means to be with teachers and educators and staff who care about the kids and are there to uplift the kids. That nothing replaces that human contact, that support, that love. And the parents, all of them spoke from the heart about their own children. What they had gone through during this pandemic, what they were missing, what they needed. Everyone expressed the appreciation that remote learning gave them something, but they all said it wasn't the same. It wasn't enough. And particularly for kids with special needs. For kids who have academic challenges, kids who needed the motivation of being in a school building surrounded by caring adults. It came through loud and clear, that these parents were making a choice because that's what their kids needed.

So I want to thank you Lude, thank all the other parents. And I just want to say to the principal, you're doing something remarkable here. Thank you for all you did with the regional enrichment center, keeping that work going for the kids of essential workers. But thank you also, I can tell there's a lot of spirit here about everyone working together in this school community to come back. And you gave us a great lesson in terms of the creativity this school applied. Making its own choices about what was going to work for this school community. So thank you for your leadership and for reminding us of what a school means. And before I bring on the Chancellor, I just want to say that I think there was some very powerful moments in that discussion about the larger meaning of a school to a family. One of the parents said for some kids, particularly kids who are less privileged, particularly kids whose families have gone through a lot of challenges, that the time in school each day is the light of their day. The light of their day, the time in their day when they have hope and when they can see past whatever challenges their current circumstances have. That's part of why I believe it's so important to come back now and give kids that support again. So with that, I'm going to turn to the Chancellor with deep appreciation to you and your team. And we're seeing day by day, the gathering momentum as we get ready to start school. And we saw the good work being done by the Ventilation Action teams, getting us ready. Thank you for all your good work and your team. Come on up, Chancellor Carranza.

[Applause]

Schools Chancellor Richard Carranza: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. And I also want to add my voice to thank Lude and Monet, Cashmere, Henry and Lisa, who are the other parents that took

time to share with us very personal and intimate anecdotes about their children and why they've made the decision that they are all in on blended learning. So I want to thank you for that perspective. Very helpful. I also want to give a shout out to our principal, Mr. Brett Schneider. You run a good ship here, sir. And one of the things that you should all is that as we speak, this site also serves as a regional education center, enrichment center. So there are children that have been here, the children are first responders and essential personnel since March. And Mr. Schneider has volunteered his time, the entire time, including all summer to be the two shift a day administrator here at this site. So I can't think of a more poignant and powerful example of someone who is all in for children. So thank you.

I also understand this may be the site of some outdoor learning activities in the very near future. Is that correct? Okay. Don't want to – I don't want to blow his surprise, but I think that's a good thing as well. As the Mayor has said, we've just spent some really incredibly powerful time listening to parents, directly from parents who have shared with us reasons why they have made the decision to be all in. Lude has spoken about in her calculus, in her decision making process, the fact that New Yorkers have done the hard work of really suppressing the community spread of COVID-19. And that's why she feels confident that we can come back to a blended learning environment. And our students will be safe. When she's seen what her school has been doing in terms of the PPE and the disinfectant, but more importantly when she speaks to her children about what they miss, they miss their teachers, they miss the routine, they miss their friends. They miss the knowledge of being in a regular routine with others and how powerful that has been for her children. And how she's seen that her children have suffered without having that in-person kind of interaction. It was very powerful. The Mayor and I work with plans all day. We work with multiple plans and planning A, B, C, D, E, F, and G. And then for every plan we have critics, A, B, C, D, E, F, and G. So to hear directly from our parents has been just very, very powerful. So I want to thank you for that.

I mentioned the rec site that is here. We've learned a tremendous amount from our rec sites, everything from how we enter the building, to how we keep PPE on, how do we keep masks on children? How do we encourage safe practices for social distancing? How do we make sure that students are hand washing and that they're sanitizing and we're continuously cleaning? Those are all great examples that we've learned from the rec sites here. And I'm very happy to say that at this rec center, we have had no cases of spread here at this rec site. So there is proof that this actually works. So I could say many, many more things, but I do want to say we are going to continue to work every single day to get to the point where our students and our staff can come together. September will be the time – and New Yorkers help us. Continue to follow the safety advice of our medical experts, so that we have this opportunity to come together. And to all parents, I'm going to say, now is the time to start speaking to your children about what this school year will look like, that social distancing, what will that mean? That the wearing of face masks, what will that mean? That we will have smaller groups. That we will eat our lunch in one area, not the big cafeteria. It's time now to explain to our children, what's going to be different while also celebrating the fact that they will be able to see their teachers and their friends again, very soon. So with that, I'll turn it back over to the Mayor. Thank you all.

Mayor: Stick around. I think you'll be needed for the Q and A, just want to say one more point. It was very striking. The classroom we looked at where the Ventilation Action team was doing

the inspection. You know, that classroom is going to have nine students in it under the plan for reopening. I asked the principal, what number of students would have been in that in a normal time? He said between 24 and 28 students. So I just want everyone understand the amount of innovation, the intense changes that principals and educators are making to be able to keep kids safe. That is a massive difference to go from 24 to 28 kids to only nine kids. Further evidence of how we can create the distancing our kids need. Okay. With that, let's take some questions. Go ahead, Katie.

Question: I wanted to ask, I know I asked this morning but there's this video being shared by educators and principals of toilet paper on a stick. It looks like it's [inaudible] that there's air coming out. Does it also test the amount? Can you explain that process? [Inaudible] show that there is air coming out of these vents, but does it matter how much air is coming out and how does that [inaudible]?

Mayor: I can't give you a great technical answer. I can say that – I talked this morning with our Health folks and they said, yeah, it is a matter of making sure there's just consistent airflow coming out of it. And that's actually the way the CDC recommends you test these things as well. Do you have anything to add?

Chancellor Carranza: Yeah. So the tissue test is a test for air flow. And I think that some of these issues are getting a little conflated. There's air flow to make sure that there is actually air being exchanged within a room. And then there's air quality. Air quality uses CO2 machines, and they measure CO2. But you don't do that in an empty room. You obviously have to have people in the room to then measure all the breadth. And I forget what it's called. Carbon dioxide I guess it is. And oxygen. So this is a CDC recommended method for testing air flow. What the engineers also said to us, which was very powerful, is that in this building, they have these very large sweeping windows. So they are also testing to make sure that you can open windows and have that air exchange as well. So it's all part determining and making sure that we're able to have air flow in a building. And again, that's a CDC recommended method for testing flow.

Question: Not to belabor the tissue on a stick test situation. One thing that I saw on the video that was being shared was teachers were asking what if air is coming out of one vent, but not the other? [Inaudible] Air coming out more of one vent but it seemed that they were saying formally asked, does it work? Yes or no. [Inaudible] Can you give us a little bit more specifics on, is there a degree in which the tissue test [inaudible] how many of these vents [inaudible]?

Mayor: Yeah, let's – I don't want Richard and I pretend to be engineers. Why don't we tomorrow, we'll get one of the folks in for the press conference who's actually expert. But clearly the goal here is to have all the different ways you can get air flow operational. One of the things we said is some windows had for a long time not been open. We're now going to make those open up. Obviously if a vent isn't working, we want to repair it. The goal here is to maximize the amount of air flowing through a room. So I understand videos. I understand concerns and people question bureaucracy, but the charge given to these engineers is tell us if it's good enough. If it's not tell us we got to fix it. We are not afraid of fixing things, but let's get an expert for you for tomorrow.

Question: One question we've heard from parents and teachers is why are you doing this now, two weeks to go –

Mayor: Again, we've been at this since June 3rd, that was the first run through by the custodial engineers. This is a final run-through. We are, and I said to people this morning, we're getting ready for liftoff. There's a final run through. What we're finding – we'll have numbers in the morning, but hundreds of schools have already passed. They've been – all their classrooms checked. And we're going to continue to give you updates day by day of how many schools have been fully checked and ready to go. I don't want to leave a misimpression. The work's been going on all summer. You had something?

Question: [Inaudible]

[Chancellor Carranza speaks in Spanish:]

Mayor: Go ahead – you guys are really interested in this.

Question: [Inaudible]

Mayor: Again. I don't – I understand why it captures your imagination, but I don't want to take one school, one person, and treat that as the entire school system, we will get with you tomorrow at our press conference, some of the folks who are the experts in this field to tell you how the tests are going on, but I want you to be more clear about our mandate to the engineers, to the Schools Construction Authority, to principals. If the airflow is not good enough, we want to know about it so we can fix it. We don't want to – again, I think there's almost like a misunderstanding here. I don't want a child in a room that doesn't have proper airflow. If we find it, then the question is, can you fix that room? There's still plenty of time to make whatever changes we need to make, and if we can't, we're not going to use that room. We've been really clear about it. We're just not going to use the room. Go ahead.

Question: [Inaudible]

Mayor: Did you say District Six?

Question: [Inaudible]

Mayor: Well, clearly I'll start and let the Chancellor [inaudible]. Look, I think we should realize that people are taking very, very seriously this low class sizes – the lowest class sizes we've ever seen in history, obviously. So today a classroom would nine students. I mean, imagine that. So what we're going to do is we have to keep making sure that we can accommodate those kids. If a school needs additional staffing Chancellor's talked about, there are educators throughout the school system doing other types of jobs. They'll come in to service substitute teachers. Obviously we use them all the time. So we're going to work with each school to figure out what they need and get them the help they need.

Chancellor Carranza: Yeah, so what, I would also just add to that, and I think the Mayor touched upon many of those things – so we've already mobilized anyone that has an underlying credential, a teaching credential that are outside of a school environment, and these are talented people. They're literacy coaches, they're early childhood coaches, they're master teachers. But we've identified all of those personnel. In addition, we've mobilized, and if you will put a reservation with every single one of our substitutes as well. We've also reached out to CUNY around some of their personnel as well. So as schools are in the process now of programming their school, and there are some variables that are important here too. Some schools may have a higher percentage of their faculty that have applied for and received a medical accommodation, which takes him out of the mix for in-person learning, but that gives them more personnel for the remote learning because they're still teaching. So every school is going to be a little different but principals have been great about giving us that information, and then we are working very closely with both UFT and CSA on being able to have some flexibility as well on staffing the different models, the remote learning model, the in-person blended model, and in the virtual. So again, lots of complex issues, but we're working, we're working through them, and our expectation is that we will start the school year being able to man every single one of those learning modalities.

Mayor: Okay everyone, we've got only time for a few more. So let me get people who haven't had a chance, go ahead.

Question: [Inaudible]

Mayor: You mean throughout the year? Yeah.

Question: [Inaudible]

Mayor: Yeah, so I'll start and turn to the Chancellor, and we'll certainly say more about this tomorrow too. Look at again, the first of all, I don't start with the assumption. The windows will be closed in the winter time. It really depends on the configuration of the room and what works and what doesn't, but we absolutely must to your question. We have to have the right airflow in every room. So if there's times in winter, we have to do something different, we still have to feel comfortable that the airflow is right and that's just ongoing inspection. That's what custodial services is there to do – to make sure things are working, and I'll tell you something, I think – I've talked to a lot of custodial engineers over time. They're very devoted to their buildings, their kids, you know, the school community. So my simple answer and tell me if you want to add, is we're going to monitor throughout the year, not just for the first day, we're going to monitor throughout the year. Okay, go ahead.

Question: [Inaudible]

Mayor: Sure. I wanted the principal to jump in and give you a real live example of what he's thinking of. But look, the idea is this is not new on the level of, you know, principals, teachers have used outdoor spaces previously, they've used streets adjoining schools that have been closed off. There's plenty of experience – courtyards, playgrounds – there's all sorts of experience doing it. We're saying each principal, what do you want to do? What do you want to

do? How can we help you do it? How many roughly applications have you gotten? What's your latest? Over 300 applications, you know, in a day and a half. I mean, it's clearly – and you'll hear in a moment from the principal, these are professionals who think about this stuff all day, every day. So we want to help them – “if they say, okay, I need to use this playing field.” Great. They say, “can we close off a school next to” – excuse me – “close off the street next to the school?” If it's one that doesn't have like a bus route or something on it and we can do it or do it just for the part of the school day? Great. But I think it is an opportunity for them to be creative and do some things that they've been thinking of doing. So let's have a real life example – talk to everyone about how you think about outdoor learning.

Principal Brett Schneider: Hi, you can hear me. I'm Dr. Brett Schneider, the principal of Bronx Collaborative, founding principal – not used to taking masks off anymore. Hi, Dr. Schneider. So as a campus council, we meet weekly and we have, as you see amazing physical spaces, all of the schools on this campus identified outdoor spaces that we could book so that we had consistency to be able to look innovatively at how to set stuff up so that it wasn't “oh, today, can I find a field?” So for example, two weeks ago in campus council, I booked the football field for this semester. One of the other schools booked the soccer field. We've begun conversations, just earlier actually we were talking about how can we effectively get tenting, you know – if you're having an outdoor wedding or event, right? There's lots of ways that as long as the weather, you know, that you can deal with a certain amount of inclement weather, obviously beyond a certain point, you can't, but with sort of the vinyl or plastic tenting, with sides and zipper and heating, there's a lot of power to that, and I think the Department of Ed has been super responsive in hearing our questions and taking the spirit of communicating.

Question: [Inaudible]

Principal Schneider: Yeah, that's a great question. I think one of the things that has also been an innovation that the DOE has supported is innovative programming. So my school, for example, uses the Exception model and our families, our school leadership team, students, parents, and teachers put together an innovative and the model that would allow us to do that. So the reason why we're able to take a space of 28 and cut it down to nine is because we're using a program model called Four on the Floor, where instead of eight classes at, once you take four, double the amount of class time and credit, so that there's fewer adults the students are seeing, and those students in a nine-person pod can focus for the entire semester, all 108 hours to meet the state credit requirements for those courses between the remote and in the place. So that sort of allows that flexibility, where we have enough space inside to do that model even without the outdoor space, and so the we're looking at as a supplement – especially the climate and culture, especially for if we want to have a meeting of half of grade, right? Like indoors, there's no way to do that, and I think part of the power of having the football field or these fields for all of the schools is we all want to maintain the warmth part of what all the parents shared earlier is you can't replace the warmth of feeling faculty that like love and adore your children on that first day and the energy that comes with school, and so having the ability to be innovative and bring back that feeling so that it's not just, you're only in that nine-person room the entire year, and you can never see other classmates, and so I think that's the balance. It's supplemental, it doesn't – you know, for us, and I think a lot of people are trying to use it in those ways, the outdoor spaces to supplement and enrich rather as the only option.

Mayor: Go ahead.

Question: Regarding the outdoor learning [inaudible]?

Chancellor Carranza: Well, I think that's why this is an option. It's not a requirement. It's not a mandate. Again, the announcement that we made is that my fellow commissioners and I have agreed that we will flatten the bureaucracy of outdoor learning, especially in some of those examples that the Mayor talked about. Maybe there's a street to be closed or for a part of the day, obviously here, there's not that kind of an issue because this is all part of this campus's I would say square footage. But yeah, this isn't for everyone and that's why it's an option. It's not a mandate. We understand that there are some places where it physically and geographically may not be possible and other circumstances, but wherever communities do want to pursue it, we want to be in a role to assist them in making it happen.

Mayor: Alright, last call. You didn't go yet. Go ahead.

Question: [Inaudible]

[Chancellor Carranza speaks in Spanish]

Mayor: Okay. We'll see you in the morning, everybody. Thank you.

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