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RUSH TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO ON PIX-11 MORNING NEWS

Sukanya Krishnan: [inaudible] first day of school. Mayor Bill de Blasio's on hand to welcome parents and students on Staten Island.

Scott Stanford: That's right. He's speaking with PIX-11 – Kirstin Cole live in St. George at PS 59 with the mayor. Kirstin?

Kirstin Cole: Yeah. Good morning to you, Scott and Suki. We are here with Mayor de Blasio today. He is here to welcome families and kids to PS 59 in St. George on Staten Island, and to celebrate the successful rollout of your pre-k initiative. Even though there were 15,000 additional spots still available, does that mean that it didn't get out to enough people?

Mayor Bill de Blasio: No, 65,000-plus kids signed up. And you can see some of them right here. That is literally as many kids as the entire school system of Boston or Seattle. It's an incredible day for New York City. 65,000 kids getting free, high-quality, full-day pre-k. Now, there are more seats available. So, if you want your child in pre-k and you haven't signed up, call 3-1-1, or go online – nyc.gov/prek.

KC: It's not too late?

Mayor: It's not too late. Parents can keep signing up in September. Some can even sign up in October if they wanted. But the seats are there for them.

KC: So, as New Yorkers, we say thank you for doing this for us yesterday. What can you do for us today? What's next for New York City schools? Because there's always room for improvement. Whether it's graduation rates, whether it's scoring better on the regents tests – what are we going to do next?

Mayor: Next week I'm going to speak about a lot of the things we intend to do next, because I agree with you exactly. We want to strengthen our school across the system – not just pre-k. All the way up – we want to strengthen graduation rates, college readiness, and we're going to have a lot to put forward on that. But what's great about today is, this is really the foundation for the future not only for the individual children and their families, but this will make the whole school system stronger because now every child begins with a strong educational foundation. That wasn't true in the past. When I came into office, 20,000 kids were getting full-day, pre-k. Now, it's 65,000. That's going to make a big difference.

KC: And we love to applaud the successes. Even as we do that, we have to talk about something that is a very dark cloud hanging over our city right now. Carey Gabay is in the hospital right now –

Mayor: Yes.

KC: – He's in critical condition. The West Indian-American Day Parade continues to be marred by violence each year, despite bringing in more than 1,000 extra police officers on that parade route. How is it that you can

balance the celebration of that day, and having the celebrations the night before, with true safety? Can you guarantee New Yorkers' safety around this event?

Mayor: First of all, I was with Carey's family that morning [inaudible] afternoon. It was very, very touching. This is a guy who's devoted his life to public service, and a good human being, and now fighting for his life. So, we're all feeling it. All New Yorkers are feeling this. But that celebration literally attracts million of people, and there's very few incidents of violence in the end. That's what we have to remember. The millions and millions of law abiding –

KC: But we still had four people shot –

Mayor: And that's four too many –

KC: – one person fatally stabbed.

Mayor: – and that's one too many. And the NYPD has done better each year at reducing the violence. But let's be clear, millions of law-abiding people participate in that parade and the associated celebration, and it's a big part of the city. We're going to respect those celebrations, but we're going to make them safer. I have faith that the NYPD can do that.

KC: Is it because there's a sort of air of lawlessness around this parade. It's well know that police officers do not make arrests for any public drinking, for any public smoking of marijuana. Is that lawlessness –

Mayor: I don't agree with that.

KC: – sending the wrong message?

Mayor: I don't agree with that. The NYPD has made this parade safer year after year. That is the fact. And look, four shootings is four shootings too many. But, as you see, crime is going down in the city because of the efforts of the NYPD. We have 1,300 more cops coming on board. We have better training, better technology. Again – crime down between four and five percent compared to the last year, and last year was a record low year for crime. NYPD is getting better all the time and they're going to address this issue too.

KC: The other thing that we see so many headlines of is you having very front-page goings on, back and forth with different political figures. Whether it's Governor Cuomo, whether it's recently Mayor Giuliani – there was a back hand forth over the homeless numbers in New York City. Is it that you've become a political piñata? Is this business as usual when you're the mayor of New York City?

Mayor: It is absolutely business as usual for any mayor to come under criticism in today's culture. Let's face it, conflict attracts media attention. But I'm going to stand up for what's right for New Yorkers. I'm going to do everything I have to do to make the lives of New Yorkers better. Some people are going to have a political problem with it – that doesn't surprise me. But we're going to keep doing things like this – 65,000 kids in pre-k. I want to hear who has an argument against that.

KC: I don't think any parent's going to have an argument against that. And as a mom about to send my little guy off to pre-k this fall, it's something that all of us look forward to.

Mayor: Congratulations.

KC: Mr. de Blasio, thank you so much for being us this morning. Suki and Scott, we're going to hand it back to you. It's an exciting day for so many kids. 1.1 million school kids going back to school today.

SK: I know. And can you just tell Mayor de Blasio that, you know, we thank him for his time here and, also, can you just extend the invitation that we want him to come into the studio? Tell him it's been too long since I gave him a hug, come on.

KC: Suki and Scott are saying, thank you so much for being here this morning. And, of course, we always want to have you on in studio as well so that we can continue to have robust conversations that New Yorkers can be involved in.

Mayor: I look forward to it. Suki, I miss you. I'm coming by.

SK: Thank you. I'm hugging you, kissing you back too. I appreciate it. Mayor Bill de Blasio – reporting live on Staten Island – giving us a real sense and a feel of what's happening in terms of full-day, pre-k, and just the tenor of what he's trying to do to help kids get a better step ahead.

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