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**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO, SCHOOLS CHANCELLOR CARRANZA  
DELIVER REMARKS ON THE DISTRICT 15 DIVERSITY PLAN**

**Mayor Bill de Blasio:** Welcome to M.S. 51 everybody.

[Applause]

Neal, I want to thank you, I want to thank you for all the work that you have done on the Community Education Counsel and on the Diversity Working Group. And I think you summarized it beautifully, but I also want to thank you for talking to people about your own life's journey and why this is such an important moment for your family, and providing for your kids the things that maybe you did not get to experience the way you should have, but they are going to get to experience, and the kids after them are going to get to experience because of your work, and everyone else's work here. Let's thank Neal.

[Applause]

Success has many mothers, and fathers. I want to thank people here who are all part of this process in District 15. District 15 is my home in every way, and I honor and appreciate the people of this community, and folks who have come forward as leaders. I want to thank the DOE leaders for our community, Executive Superintendent Karen Watts, and District 15 Superintendent Anita Skop.

[Applause]

When Chiara, and Dante went here for part of the time they were here – Lenore DiLeo-Berner was a principal. She is now on a fellowship training other principals. And I want to thank her, and I want to thank the Acting Principal of M.S. 51, Greg Stanislaus for the extraordinary work they do in this school.

[Applause]

To the District 15 Diversity Plan Working Group, you put a lot of time and energy, and heart, and soul, and creativity, and intelligence into this process. I am so proud of you and so thankful for all of you. Let's all salute your neighbor.

[Applause]

And there's been a lot of support for this process as well from the organizations who represent our educators and with us here today I want to thank him as the first Vice President of the CSA, Henry Rubio, thank you for being with us.

[Applause]

First, on a very human level – so this gymnasium I spent a lot of my life in this gymnasium right here. And I am flooded with wonderful memories. Chiara and Dante both were part of the 7-8 Precinct Youth League that had its basketball games here. And I remember so fondly on these very basketball hoops, great historic moments in our family history. And I also want to note for the record that in her very last game in the league, Chiara sprained her finger on a play, but as a result she got two foul shots. And she had a sprained finger, we didn't know it yet. But she had a sprained finger. And although she missed the first shot, on the very last shot of her basketball career she scored, so I want to honor her for that.

[Applause]

So I am, was, and am and will always be a District 15 dad. But today I stand here as the Mayor of this great city. And on behalf of the City of New York, and the DOE, I am here to formally approve the District 15 Diversity plan.

[Applause]

Congratulations to all of you.

[Applause]

Now I want to make clear, these are big complicated, challenging, historic issues. But why this plan is so powerful is it was created by this community for this community. This is truly an expression of grass roots leadership. And people deciding that we could reach farther and doing the hard work to figure out how we would get there. I know there's been a really extensive full dialogue in this community. And it's very gratifying to see this kind of democracy playing out. People at the grass roots working with the educators in the Department of Education, figuring out an approach that had not been used before but we all believe is the right approach. I want to tell you something else from personal experience that speaks to how far we have come and it's just a small example from my own life. But it speaks volumes I think. So I was part of group sort of like this one a while back when Chiara and Dante were at P.S 372 here in this community. And it was a wonderful school, a wonderful familial school community. But it did not sufficiently reflect our district and everyone knew it. There weren't enough kids from Sunset Park; there weren't enough kids from Red Hook. So we formed what we called the diversity committee. And we came up with different models of how we could address the issue and everyone felt very good. And I'm sure somewhat like folks feel today, that they did a lot of hard work, and I came up with a plan. But they are the parallel stops, because this was about 15 years ago. And we brought our plan to the Department of Education and got the coldest shoulder you've ever seen. We believe there was a way for kids of all backgrounds to learn together that everyone would benefit. But the DOE did not share that commitment. And so that effort went nowhere. 15 years

ago that DOE blew us off. What a difference 15 years makes. This DOE has said thank you to all these parents and educators, and yes we can.

[Applause]

So it's a very different thing when you come up against a bureaucracy that shuts you down versus finding that your ideas are received and respected at City Hall, and at the Tweed Building. And this time these ideas are going to turn into action, because everyone is on the same page. These are changes we need and changes we can achieve for the good of all. And you can feel in the air in this city – momentum for diversity is growing, momentum for change is growing. We saw it in District 3 on the West Side of Manhattan. We saw it in District 1 in the Lower East Side of Manhattan. Now, District 15 Brooklyn. And this movement is growing. And what's so powerful is that it is coming from the grass roots. And these are the most personal of issues. Particularly what I am talking about the grade school level, and the middle school level. For parents nothing could be more personal than their children at which school they go to, and what those schools are like. That's why it's been so important that these decisions be made with the grass roots, and listening to what people think will work and what they think won't work. And asking them what they need to make it work, and getting them the support and resources to bring this to fruition. That's what happened here. I have believed for a long time that the most profound social change comes from the grassroots, but also the most lasting social change. It is incumbent upon us as we step into a new era that we get it right, and that we prove the model can work for everyone. That's why this grass roots process was so important as well. The amount of buy in and support is crucial. And again we will keep providing the resources needed not only here in District 15 to make this reality work but also in other districts that are exploring what they can do next. The City of New York is providing grants to support that kind of community planning. The State of New York is as well and that's crucial to getting it right.

The goal is absolutely consistent with the message we talked about over the last five years and it is summarized by the simple phrase, Equity and Excellence. It's not one or the other, it has to be both. And what's beautiful about this plan is that, that view, that belief suffused everything that people did. They did not say let's have diversity but schools in which kids can't succeed and they did not say let's have schools in which some kids succeed and other kids don't succeed. They said we need a common standard of schools where every child succeeds and kids learn together with children of all backgrounds. That's what Equity and Excellence is all about. It is not an easy process and I want to be blunt about this – this is not easy, it takes a lot of dialogue. It takes a lot of work. It takes some time. These are issues that we have been grappling with in this city and in this country for many decades. And I have to say there's not a huge number of models to draw upon that have worked. It's part of why we have had to keep experimenting, but I have more confidence than ever that what's been done here in District 15 is going to be one of the models that works for the long haul and really serves all of our kids. And that's an amazing achievement. Everyone I will complete my remarks with just one point and then a few words in Spanish. I have faith that we will make big changes. Yes, again it will take time, it will take work, there will be challenges but I have faith that working together and listening to parents, and listening to educators, that we will surely get there in this city. And I have faith in all of you. Thank you, thank you.

[Applause]

A few words in Spanish.

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

With that, a man who, very first conversations I had with him he talked about social justice and he talked about equity and pretty much every conversation I've had with him since, he's talked about social justice and he's talked about equity – our Chancellor Richard Carranza.

[Applause]

**Schools Chancellor Richard Carranza:** So thank you Mr. Mayor and I want to thank everyone that's here on this momentous occasion. I want to just take it a step further Mr. Mayor and with everyone's permission I want call out by name individuals that spent months and months, long hours here in this working group – for District 15 crafting what we, what you have now approved Sir and we embrace. So I want to thank our superintendent, Anita Skop, thank you for your leadership.

[Applause]

But I also want to recognize and I feel like graduation, let's save applause until I read everybody's name.

[Laughter]

But I want to recognize Antelma Valdez, Benji and Eliza, our student representatives, Carrie McLaren, Coletta Walker, Denise Watson, Feryal Abuhammoud, Julie Stein Brockway, Laura Espinosa, Leonor DiLeo-Berner, Lin Sean, Maria Diaz, Miriam Nunberg, Neal Zephyrin, Raymond Chen, and then also from our office Sadye Campoamor and Andy McClintock and it would not be right to also not mention an incredible organization that helped us with the facilitation and the community engagement. WXY. A big round of applause.

[Applause]

But Mr. Mayor it's also very important to note that your leadership has been transformational in this process and this conversation. But there are two individuals who are seated here as well that I want to personally congratulate as well because they have taken the political mantle and they have said that our hopes are that this process would come to fruition but knowing that hope is not a strategy they actually put their political weight behind it and have been absolutely unflappable supporters of this process so I want to thank Councilmember Brad Landler.

[Applause]

And Councilmember Carlos Menchaca.

[Applause]

This would not have been possible without your hard work and your leadership and your steadfastness so I want to thank you. And so to all of our partners and our parents, our advocates,

our students, our elected officials and our community members – I want to say to you thank you, today is literally the shot heard round the world as it pertains to equity in our city. In June I had the opportunity as the brand new chancellor to meet with members of the D15 Diversity Group. I was then, and I continue to be now, extremely proud of the thoughtful work done by this community where the Mayor has spoken so eloquently about how difficult this work really is. This D15 Working Group took that challenge, invested themselves, invested their neighbors and came out with a plan that I think is actually a template for many others in our community. The process brought everyone to the table, stock holders and community members from across the district and they had those tough conversations in what I especially appreciate in different languages.

They asked why do we have academic screens at almost all of our middle schools? I think I have been asking that question too.

[Applause]

Why are we putting nine and ten-year-olds, nine and ten-year-olds through such a stressful process as our parent shared us with his daughter. Why are we segregating our students? These are questions that the Working Group was asking and through all of those questions the irrefutable line that I heard from every one of those Working Group members is our public schools belong to everyone and we want to make sure that that happens.

[Applause]

What I also appreciate is that they just didn't come together and have a big screamfest. They looked at data, they looked at potential solutions, they had real back and forth as a community. They arrived at an answer as a community and put forward a plan as a community. This my friends, is real action with real buy in, with real ownership of this plan and its success. And now, just because the plan is approved doesn't mean this is over. It is not over. The DOE that our Mayor described is not the DOE of 2018, 2019 and going forward. We welcome these plans and we welcome these conversations. And you also have to remember it's not just about admissions, it's about curriculum, it's about inclusive practices. It's about social emotional learning so that all students, regardless of schools, are supported academically and with a school climate that fosters even greater academic achievement. The District 15 community is going to keep having these conversations and I encourage you to continue to have the conversations but I'm particularly excited today because we are not just announcing the Mayor's approval of the plan. You see it's a top down, bottom up approach. So from the top, we are signaling that we want communities to do this work and that we will pay for it, we will invest in this work.

[Applause]

We will respect the plans that are put forward that are put forward to us. And from the bottom up we are empowering communities where the hard conversations will need to happen. You see they can't happen at Tweed, they have to happen in the neighborhoods, in the boroughs where people know the best. Our public schools belong to everyone and this next step in making that vision a reality could not be more important to the future vitality of New York. Thank you to the D15 community. I want to thank you to everyone who has participated – to you I say my hat's off but more importantly my hand is out. Let's work together, let's get to work.

[Applause]

[Chancellor Carranza speaks in Spanish]

[...]

**Mayor:** Alright, we're going to take media questions on this announcement. We'll be taking thereafter questions on all other topics, but first on this announcement. Yes?

**Question:** Just wondering, I know you've been giving money to other districts, District 15 is anomalous in many ways. You have a lot of parents here who've had the time to actually volunteer their efforts over the last year. At what point in districts that may not have the same sort of glut of volunteer parents does the City have to come in? What do you see as the cities ultimate role in districts that are obviously very different from this one, or is it purely sort of, giving money to have them create their own plan?

**Mayor:** Great question, I would say first of all 32 districts have their own reality. Any one of our 32 districts would be the size of, you know, a major American school system in most other parts of the country. But I would disagree with one element, and I think your question is honest, but I want to disagree with one element of it because I've worked with parents all over the city. There's no district that doesn't have a lot of active parents.

[Applause]

And I think it's fair and objective to say, in some places people may have more time and energy to give for economic reasons for example, but there's nonetheless extraordinary – extraordinary parent activism and energy all over the city. When you look at the CEC's alone, you know, right there is a well spring of parent involvement, obviously the PTA's as well. So we're never going to lack for parents to engage the process.

I think the second point you raised, the notion of the DOE providing that consistent support absolutely is necessary. We believe in the broad vision but we think it has to be done district by district in the right way, and so we have to be there with expertise and we have to be there with time and energy of educators to work with the parents and we will make that happen. And by the way, as I said, not only our own direct resources, but the state is putting resources in as well which is fantastic.

The last thing I'd say which is really I think your question has sparked a memory that I have tried to sublimate and get rid of, there was a day, as you know I have a complex set of views about my predecessor, but there was one day where he was being asked I think on his weekly call-in show about some issue involving parents and their views on education. And he said well all these parents aren't particularly educated themselves and they don't know what a good education looks like. And then went on to offer his views on what the result it was from that assumption.

I was deeply upset when I heard that because everyone of us comes from families that at one point, in many cases not so long ago, were not blessed with every educational opportunity. My

grandparents who came from Southern Italy and came here not speaking English, according to Michael Bloomberg's comment at that time, would not have understood what a good education was for their children but their three daughters went to college, my mom went to Smith College in Massachusetts, they certainly figured it out and they knew that nothing was more important than a great education for their kids.

So I say that to say, if the inference – no disrespect to the question – if the inference is that folks that may have fewer resources or folks that may be immigrant aren't going to be as focused or as concerned, I think it's quite the opposite. I think folks that have had less fair treatment want better education for their kids and put more time and energy into achieving it.

[Applause]

Other questions, yes?

**Question:** Can you talk about how the new grants will work? Are districts going to apply to them? Are there already certain districts [inaudible]?

**Mayor:** Josh Wallack, our Deputy Chancellor is going to come up, and I want to, you know, Brad Lander gave him credit because Brad Lander employed him before I did and I stole him from Brad Lander back when I was a City Councilman in this district. So that was Brad trying to claim some origination there. But, Josh has done an outstanding job as our Deputy Chancellor including his heroic efforts in creating Pre-K and 3-K and he's been one of the driving forces here, so as to how we're going to support those districts and which districts. Go ahead Josh.

**Deputy Chancellor for Strategy and Policy Josh Wallack, Department of Education:** So thanks. So we are going to have an application process for districts that are interested to step forward and do this work and we'll take those applications this fall and then work with each district for an approach. And we've already seen 14 school districts across the city step forward to take State grants, as the Mayor alluded to, to start the planning process. So we're hopeful that these resources can help them continue that work much the way that District 15 did.

**Mayor:** Just say which districts are [inaudible].

**Deputy Chancellor Wallack:** Sure, the districts that have received State funding so far are Districts 1, East Village, Lower East Side; District 2 which is the East Side south of 96<sup>th</sup> Street and the West Side South 59<sup>th</sup> Street; District 3, Upper West Side, Morning Side Heights - so some of these are districts that have already done work but want to continue it - District 10, The North Bronx; District 13, Brooklyn Heights East to Clinton Hill; this District, 15; 20 in Southern Brooklyn, Bay Ridge, Borough Park, Dyker Heights – I won't name every neighborhood in each district - 21 which Coney Island, Brighton Beach, Bensonhurst East; 22, Midwood, Mill Base, and Sheepshead Bay; 24 in Queens, which is Corona, Elmhurst, Maspeth; 27, which is Ozone Park, Howard Beach, and the Rockaways, Broad Channel; 28, Forrest Hills, Kew Gardens, Regal Park, Jamaica; And 30 which is Western Queens, Long Island City, Astoria, Jackson Heights, Sunnyside, Woodside; And District 31, Staten Island. So, real interest from all over the city.

**Mayor:** Excellent, a man with his facts. Back there.

**Question:** Mr. Mayor, should district parents expect a demonstrable, narrowing of the achievement gap?

**Mayor:** Also a great question, I appreciate that. That is certainly the goal. There are so many important values to consider here and we believe in educational opportunity for all and we believe in the value of people getting to know each other and breaking down boundaries. But we are also very focused on closing that achievement gap. We've been – all of us proud – I want to thank all the educators in the room.

The city's continued to make progress on graduation rate, on college readiness and kids going to college readiness and kids going to college on test scores, but what we still struggle with is closing that achievement gap and I do think this strategy is going to be one of the things that becomes a difference maker along with pure equalization strategies like Pre-K for All and 3-K for All, which probably to me are the single most foundational to closing the achievement gap, but I think strategy will also be an important contributor. Dave?

**Question:** Just two things, this is going for next year I take it because we don't have anything to show how this school, M.S. 51 for example, has changed, it's for next year –

**Mayor:** So Chancellor Josh, whoever wants to speak about the mechanics of the timeline on this and when it will affect the admissions process?

**Deputy Chancellor Wallack:** So that's right. This will begin for this coming applications process which will open at the end of October -

[Applause]

For the group of students that enters school next fall, so you'll see the impacts next fall.

**Question:** So my main question – and I know this is a loaded question – but what do you tell parents of children who are very successful already in school, they're doing very well, and they are fearful that if the number of kids increases in their school where their children are doing well who, for example, are homeless, don't do as well on scores, speak English as a second language, and their fearful that will dilute the overall quality of the education they are getting. I know it's a loaded question, but what do you tell those parents who are fearful?

**Mayor:** So I am going to offer my thoughts and the Chancellor may have his thoughts and I also want to see if Leonor and Laura who I know well would come forward and offer there – I'm just going to deputize you – and offer your thoughts as principals from our community. The question to me is, are you going to have an education for your child that works for your child? That's the essential question a parent asks themselves.

And what we've found over the years is that parents had some information but a lot times often had to rely on reputation and word of mouth and a lot of information that proved not to be the whole store. And that there were many schools that were really very good but didn't get the credit they deserved and there were many teachers that were very good, laboring in places that didn't get the renown, and that infect the whole – the whole kind of dialogue was off kilter from the beginning.



But the other thing that I think is very fair and very true, and I do want to now, just because I offered a critique before, I also want to give some credit where credit is due to the previous administration. You know a process of starting to improve our school system started then when mayoral control was brought in and certainly a number of schools moved forward, not all but a number. That has continued in our administration with different strategies that have moved a number of other schools forward.

So, I think today you have a universe of schools in this city, and certainly in this district, where, by every objective measure, there are more and more strong schools than we've ever seen. And so parents have more and better options, and there's also a commitment here, in the DOE and in this district to get it right, to make sure that every child is served well.

So, I went through this very same process that Josh describes – starts next month – I went through it ten years ago right now. And you know I think from that perspective parents want to know that something's going to work for their kid and they want some evidence of that. And I think what's been so beautiful in this process is that the educators speak with such passion about why they believe it will work and why they believe they can provide a great education for all the kids.

So, that's why I want you to hear from them. But first, Chancellor, do you want to add?

**Chancellor Carranza:** Yeah, so to all of our parents – there are incredible options for all of our students in our schools. Sometimes parents don't take the time to look because the word on the street is you only have to go to one school or to another school. But I can tell you, there are incredible opportunities and incredible options for parents in – for students in our school system. And again, I'm going to very respectfully push back on the notion that diversity waters anything down. I think it's the wrong question.

[Applause]

If that was the case, then New York City would not be the successful city it is because we are diverse. So, students in the city are in a diverse city. Students in their classrooms should be in diverse classrooms. It's the cornerstone of our democracy and I can tell you that we are going to make sure that all students have what they need to be able to not only learn but flourish in our schools.

[Applause]

**Mayor:** One of the joys of being MC is you can just put people on the spot. So, Lenore and I think I saw Laura here. Come on up.

[Inaudible]

These are two principals that I have known really, really well for years and years in this district including Lenore who has, as I said, oversaw the education of my children. So if you would both speak to why you think this will work.

**Lenore DiLeo-Berner:** Well, I have to really talk about the teachers. Teachers, not only in our district, but all over the city are truly amazing and don't get the credit they deserve. They are trained –

[Applause]

It's a bit of a myth that any school has any one type of student. Our teachers have been trained to teach all kinds of students, all kinds of learners at every different level. And certainly with the proper supports with this plan. I know that they can do greater things to a greater extent to meet the needs whether it's culturally or academically for all the students in this district.

[Applause]

**Laura Scott:** Hi, Laura Scott, P.S. 10. I agree with Lenore about the teachers but I credit my parents as well because I – my community is a very diverse one and my parents will embrace and include anyone who is different or unique or has some disability that needs to be addressed. And when we – our children are moving forward into middle schools we do the same exact thing. And we had a group of parents a few years ago get together as a cohort and say, let's try this other middle school together and let's see if we can support our kids and also make a difference. And they did.

And that's going to be our attitude moving forward with this new plan. We're really excited about it. We think that all kids should have equal access to any or every school that is out there and we can't wait to get started.

[Applause]

**Mayor:** See. I know who to call on. So, I also want to say, Dave, to your question I want to give a very personal reflection on the fact in this community which I started representing in the – what was then the school board – District 15, 1999. If – I'm going to be cold – if a parent happened to have the blessing of a higher education and lived in the community here, they were probably not looking to send their kid to P.S. 10 where Laura is now the principal. So if you go back in time – 1999, not that long ago, under Laura's leadership, parents are knocking down the door to go to P.S. 10.

It's one of the great schools in this community as well regarded as that. But that happened in the course of just a few years. And what she said also about parents saying, hey wait a minute, here's a middle school, this looks really promising, why don't we all go and make this part of our lives, and also help it be great?

And that's a really important part of this equation too. Parents increasingly are not just bystanders. If they go into a school community, they aim to make it as strong as it can be and that's something that's an important part. There's a different attitude now about not just accepting what is given to them by the DOE but trying to make it something greater.

**Question:** [Inaudible] about school districts that either don't want to do this work or that there's a working group that does do the work, maybe even with the funds that you're providing but then overall the rest of the school district isn't as excited about putting the plan in place. At some

point, does the City have a responsibility – if you believe this is the right thing for children, do you have a responsibility to all children in the city that they have diverse schools as well?

**Mayor:** The broad answer is yes but the challenge – the honest challenge of geography and housing realities is a real thing we have to look at in this equation and the different approaches in each district will be different because of that.

Some – I mean District 15, if you look at it carefully has had way too much separation even though the opportunity for diversification within the district was staring us all in the face because you have this rich variety of neighborhoods that all connect. But in some other places, that's less true. So, I think it will be different district by district. I think we have to first maximize community involvement, parent involvement, and believe that that will get us to a good place in certainly most districts.

And then if we find there's some place where there's something that we think we can be done and parents are not yet there, we're obviously going to work hard to get them there and to engage them. But I want to emphasize that this is a beginning.

I think this is – now with the successful efforts in CEC 3, CEC 1, and here, we have more of a template than we've ever had. It still is not necessarily a one size fits all to say the least for the whole city because it's a big complex city but I'm hopeful.

And I think – the honest answer is we want to go down the road. You heard that list that Josh read off. That's a lot of work ahead. Those next set – that next set which really covers a lot of the city is going to tell us a lot more about how we ultimately get to a citywide vision.

Yes, please?

**Council Member Brad Lander:** That is a good and important question but I also really want to credit the forward motion that has come from the work people have done. Each time something kind of works I think you see the fear go down a little and the courage go up a little. So, as a result of the work that was done in District 1 and District 3, I think the working group felt the courage to go further and I know when the school-by-school [inaudible] admissions policy was developed you guys said well that's not going to be enough and you were right. It's not enough. But I don't have any doubt that the work that took place in the elementary and middle schools of this district through that plan is part of what built people's courage and confidence to move forward into this one.

So, it's not going to be enough but I really think you can see the kind of momentum from not just the planning and implementation but step-by-step helping people see it can work makes it a little easier to be confident that it will.

**Mayor:** Alright. Yes?

**Question:** Thanks. I'm curious. A school like has been such a gifted and talented orientation with teachers who are used to really accelerated programs. So, I'm wondering if you get kids with more different skill levels, do you see more tutoring, do you see more classes by preparation level? How is that going to work?

**Mayor:** I'm going to – obviously I'll defer to Chancellor first but I also think if Lenore would come back, and Greg, to talk about this school and how they're going to approach it, that would be great.

**Chancellor Carranza:** So, again, what we want to do is to meet the needs of all students. So, we're going to take students where they are and what we want to do is accelerate students whether it's a gifted and talented student that's been identified as such or the student that is learning English or the student with an individual education plan – we're going to meet students where they are and our job, quite frankly, is to accelerate student learning in all different kinds of ways, shapes, and forms. And part of what we are committed to doing is working very closely with our executive superintendent, our superintendent, and our principals to make sure that we have the right prescription, if you will, to meet the needs of our students. But it's better – it's always better if you hear from our principals because they're doing this work every day.

**DiLeo-Berner:** You know a lot of this work we've already started. If we could use our students with disabilities as an example – a lot of people don't know that Middle School 51 has over 20 percent students with disabilities and we've included them in everything that we do in our programs. So whether it's the arts, physical education – they're involved in every aspect of the school to the point also where we offer the Living Environment Science Regents to all our students including the students with disabilities. And this year we are also doing that with our algebra class.

So, all students will be taking algebra. So, again, that speaks to the fact that over the years we've had time to create a curriculum that is beautifully differentiated so that all students can have access to these courses and all students are finding success in these courses. And you know that didn't happen overnight. It took a lot of work on the part of the teachers and the parents also trusting us that we can make this work.

So, that's just one example of making a high school level course in the 8th grade not just available to the gifted students but to all students in the school and to show that we can find success with all of our students.

So, moving forward, that includes students at all levels. So, bring it on. We're ready.

[Applause]

**Greg Stanislaus:** I do believe the question has already been answered –

[Laughter]

But I will add this since the Mayor called me – the sign behind me says Equity and Excellence For All but there was a time growing up in East New York in the Brownsville Houses, Van Dyck Houses in Brownsville, that it was Excellence and Equity For Some. And the thing was in my community [inaudible] want a good education, you better go to a white school. And so I just happen to be one of those brown boys in the white school. But it bothers me to think that I was the one who got through but now with this plan it's a plan that says everyone has an opportunity to get through – thank you.

[Applause]

The key for me was simply this – my parents did not have the education but they knew that education would be my key out of a bad situation. And so teachers gave me the key – not all teachers. I'm being honest with you. There were some teachers along the way that just believed in me and gave me the ticket to the next level, and so I stand here today because teachers gave me that opportunity. Teachers are not educated so that they can teach a certain group. Perhaps there's a mindset that has to now be changed to understand that we were educated to teach all people.

[Applause]

**Mayor:** Well done. Greg tried to be shy and it failed.

[Laughter]

Well done. And to all the principals – can we all give them a round of applause. Thank all the principals here.

[Applause]

I do have to say one other rejoinder on Greg's point because what he said is just profoundly sharp and true. But again Equity and Excellence – the core notion is every school has to become a good strong school. And so whatever community you're in, whatever the demographic mix in that community, whatever plan is created for diversification, every school has to be a school parents can be proud to send their kids to.

And I want to be real. I think some people – and this not what Greg was suggesting but I think it's out there in the ether – some people think the only way to get to a good education is if it is in a particular demographic community. The very goal of what we're trying to do is to break down that mistake and that problem as well.

[Applause]

So, in fact, it is in Brownsville that we began one of the most audacious things this department has ever done with 3-K For All and with the Single Shepherd program to make sure that that district and that community would soon experience truly great schools on a regular basis.

So, it all wraps together. Let me see if there's any more questions on this announcement –

**Question:** Last time you have a press conference related to diversity and [inaudible] specialized high school, that's obviously inherently, profoundly a top-down method, right, of integrating schools in which you have the State pass legislation that changes the test. Some parents felt they weren't adequately consulted at that time. Can you sort of compare the bottom-up work you're seeing in elementary and middle schools versus top-down for high schools?

**Mayor:** You are very deep today.

[Laughter]

Social change – I’ve spent my life trying to understand it, and to be an actor in it, and it’s exceedingly complex, and I really do believe that from the ground-up is the best way to make lasting change. I think there are times where there is a top-down approach that’s needed. The challenge on specialized high schools is it’s a citywide admissions process. So, the intimacy of having a community dialog is impossible. You can try and foster a dialog with 8.6 million people, that’s an entirely different endeavor than when we talk about a working group in a particular school district or a community participatory budgeting in a Council district. So, in that instance, it felt very necessary to put forward a different vision and to recognize that we needed sharp, immediate change – that this instance had to happen from the top-down, because it also was a matter of Albany. It would be a very different discussion if we controlled it all entirely. But the numbers – and I keep coming back to the Stuyvesant number, because I cannot take my eyes off it because it’s so wrong. The last admissions process for Stuyvesant – three percent Latino, one percent black. It’s unconscionable. It’s unconscionable. So, I think you hit a really important fault line there. Sometimes it is necessary to do top-down, that’s true. Sometimes something can only be achieved through legislation. But this kind of change, for it to work and for it to last should be bottom-up, ideally. And we think it can be bottom-up. And the other thing to remember – and, you know, a lot of you may know that one of the single most influential elements of my personal formation was being a long person in a city that was trying to embrace diversity in the 1970s in Cambridge, Massachusetts. And literally on our border was a city that was at war on this question – and I mean, at war – a city that had fallen into violence over these questions with the Boston busing crisis. And I saw there that it was the absence of an attempt to find a community-based solution that really took some of the very best intentions and ran them aground. So, I think this is the right way and this can work, but for the specialized high schools I think the only viable approach was to make it a public debate and take it to Albany. And by the way, it’s been an extraordinary public debate and I want to thank all of you in the media for fostering it. I’ve seen more intelligent, thoughtful – very, very broad range of views, but I’ve seen more intelligent and thoughtful dialog on the specialized school issue than on almost anything else that’s been talked about in this city lately.

Few more on this topic –

**Question:** Do you have any projections about how the middle school demographics are expected to change? There are lot of numbers like that [inaudible] District 3 –

**Mayor:** Josh, if you wouldn’t go all the way over there you could get here more quickly. Just stand next to Carla, this is going to be fine –

[Laughter]

**Deputy Chancellor Wallack:** So, we have – we’ve done some preliminary work looking at this. And basically what we do is, we look at last year’s admission cycle and sort of project what would happen under this one. And what we see is – and I want to stay loose here because they are just projections – is that we would see several schools becoming much more representative of the district as a whole, and most of them making some progress. And we can get more specific about that as we go and learn more –

**Mayor:** Why don't you describe the district as a whole student makeup?

**Deputy Chancellor Wallack:** Sure –

**Mayor:** Do you got that?

**Deputy Chancellor Wallack:** – I do, hold on one second –

**Mayor:** It's going to take going –

**Deputy Chancellor Wallack:** Yeah, it's going to take going into –

**Mayor:** Okay, you can come back.

**Deputy Chancellor Wallack:** Okay, I'll come back –

[Laughter]

**Mayor:** I thought that would handy, it's all good. Okay, last call on this proposal, and let's just take Marcia's questions on education and then we're going to let everyone escape to do good work. But hold on one second, let's just finish this piece. Go ahead, Marcia?

**Question:** Mr. Mayor, actually I have several education questions, but first of all I'd like to talk to you about school bus drivers. I know there are about over 100 who weren't given background checks, but there are also six who actually have criminal convictions. I'm wondering if you feel that you need to fire the people who have criminal convictions, especially for drunk driving and domestic abuse – that they should be – you think they should be driving students? And then what are you going to do about the people who did not have adequate background checks?

**Mayor:** So, I will certainly let the Chancellor speak to some of the specifics. This has been an absolutely unacceptable situation. We will not allow it to continue. There are already major changes underway in the supervision of our bus program, our program to get our kids to school every morning – those changes are needed. There should have been background checks for absolutely everyone, that is now being instituted, including fingerprinting. And no, I do not believe anyone who has been previously convicted of drunk driving should ever drive a child or anyone who's been convicted of any kind of violence should ever drive a child.

Again, I'll let the Chancellor speak to the administrative work.

**Chancellor Carranza:** So, I also share the Mayor's sense of outrage at what has happened at the start of the school year with transportation. The good news is that every day is better. We have reassigned bus routes for the most problematic bus routes. We have also instituted a number of changes and part of those changes – and again, I want to be clear, as part of the hiring process – it is not like bus drivers do not get screened. Everybody gets screened through the DMV background check. But what we are doing in New York is even a step beyond that, we do a secondary check. So, as the Mayor has announced, what we are doing now is that bus drivers will be subject to the same kinds of background checks as every other employee in the DOE,

which includes fingerprinting, which includes a nationwide search of criminal records. In addition to that, what I have immediately done is I've reassigned the unit that does background checks from the Office of Pupil Transportation – OPT – that work now is moving to Human Capital, our Human Resources, where they do that every single day. We are also moving the investigations when there is a complaint against a specific individual, where that investigative unit used to reside in the Office of Pupil Transportation that function now will be within our legal department and our Special Investigations Unit. So again, what we're doing is we're reconstituting, rededicating ourselves to making sure there are no loopholes. For some of the drivers that have been mentioned as having problematic background checks, we've jumped on that right away. Some of those drivers never, ever drove for us because they were caught. But again, I want to reemphasize what we are doing in New York City is above and beyond what our colleagues do in the State of New York. We don't just take that DMV background check, we've added a secondary level of background check, which is much more rigorous.

**Question:** Have you fired any of the bus drivers?

**Chancellor Carranza:** I can't speak to that at this point.

**Mayor:** We don't employ them directly.

**Chancellor Carranza:** They're not our employees as well, they get cleared by us to be able to work for their company. So again, I don't have any of those details.

**Question:** [Inaudible] be fired?

**Mayor:** Well again, Marcia, we're going to make sure they're not driving our kids. We don't run the private companies, but we can sure as hell make sure they're not driving our kids.

**Question:** [Inaudible] could you talk about –

**Mayor:** Could you hold on one second, I'm sorry to interrupt. I just want to make sure Josh answers the previous question that we had hanging there for a moment on the demographics on this district.

**Deputy Chancellor Wallack:** In terms of the racial demographics for District 15 and the way we identify them, middle school students are identified as 42 percent Hispanic, 31 percent White, three percent Other, 12 percent Asian, 12 percent black. 52 percent of the students qualify for free, reduced lunch. Nine percent are identified as English-language learners. And 26 percent have an individualized education program – those are students with disabilities. I want to say again that our projections are based on last year's numbers, and I think one thing I want to point out is that we expect that families will be making very different choices this year because we're going to be working very hard with each family to reach out to them directly and through our partners in schools to help inform them about a really wide range of excellent options. So, while our projections show that we'll do better in each school, we think we can stand to improve even more with the work that we're going to do in partnership with this community.

**Mayor:** Thank you. Well done, Josh.



[Applause]

**Question:** [Inaudible] also talk about the teacher who was arrested yesterday with child pornography?

**Mayor:** Again, absolutely unacceptable and someone who will not be teaching in this school system, going forward. But, Chancellor, you can talk about what happens next.

**Chancellor Carranza:** So, Marcia, was that the question about the teacher yesterday who was arrested? Yeah, so the teacher that was arrested yesterday has not been in the classroom – was reassigned – since January. Obviously, with that arrest we are pursuing firing that teacher forthwith.

**Question:** On the bus issue, just, you know, on the long – those sort of long times [inaudible] do you have any sort of plans, going forward – I know you've said you've re-routed some of them. Have you given any consideration to using GPS? I know that was something that was in use in your former district. Do you have any plans, concrete plans like that going forward that you want to look at?

**Chancellor Carranza:** Yes, so we already are using GPS in all of the buses that transport students with disabilities. GPS is part of that bus. We are using GPS. Again, these are all private companies, so we're working with them to get GPS into those buses as well. Routes for busing is – it seems like a very simple notion, you have stops, you pick up kids and that's all you do. When you think about the level of complexity that we've added to our routing system, just for the simple fact, for example, just one of the many variables – we are now picking up and transporting students in temporary housing. And as students in temporary housing – we've added thousands of students to the routes, which then we have to calculate how many stops, how many pickups. Again, it's not an excuse, but it is a complex issue and that's why I'm saying every day it's getting better and better. Our goal is that we don't have these kinds of delays and no-shows at all. That's our goal – to have a great system right from the beginning.

**Mayor:** Two quick additions that – one is, I'm really distressed about this situation with the school buses and we're going to be looking at the whole structure, because we need to solve the immediate problem, but I think it begs some bigger questions about how we make it a much more efficient system, going forward. But that said, to the Chancellor's point, remember that kid in shelter used to not get busing consistently. It was a decision we made a couple of years ago. It does add complexity. It's not an acceptable state of affairs either in truth, because we're trying to reorient the entire shelter system to get kids back to their home communities where hopefully they will not need buses or need them for much shorter routes. But it is one of the complicating factors that we've had to grapple with here. But the bottom line is, we've got a lot we need to change here.

Okay, I'm going to say that's it on education, and say to all of these great folks – congratulations and run while you can.

[Applause]

**Mayor:** Okay. Alright, room is almost cleared. We are a second away. Okay, let's get that door closed please. Thank you, thank you, thank you. Almost, almost, almost. And it's closed. Off topic.

**Question:** Mayor, I have two questions about the Robert F. Kennedy initiative to pay the bail of certain detainees. The first one is your administration has said you can support something, generally speaking, like that as long as it focuses on lower level offenders and those who don't pose a public safety risk, but the group said it will not make all bail decisions based on the crimes that the individual is charged with, so I'm wondering if you have any concerns about that and whether you intend to kind of share those concerns—

**Mayor:** Yeah, it's a wonderful organization I respect a lot – obviously named after one of the greatest leaders in this country's history, but I do have a concern. I think the impulse to say that people who have committed low-level offenses, non-violent offenses should not be in jail awaiting trial because of money, I think that is a very fair concern and it parallels what we are trying to address in a much bigger way which is the need for State legislation to reform the bail process and ensure that no one who commits those kinds of offenses is sitting in a jail only for economic reasons. It's not good for anyone, it's costing the taxpayers a huge amount of money, it's not fair in terms of incarceration levels and there's so many reasons why that's good policy and we want to get that State legislation next year. But to the organization, we're certainly going to communicate our concerns and I would argue their intention is noble but they should focus on low level and non-violent offenders only. Yeah?

**Question:** I have a question about that. Apparently there's a State law that limits the bail that a charity can post to \$2,000 for misdemeanor offenses but it's reported that the organization is going to use volunteers to actually post the bail—

**Mayor:** Yeah, I'm just not familiar with the law and the complexity so I just don't want to get into something I don't know the nuances of. Go ahead.

**Question:** I have a question about your meeting with the Red Sox—

**Mayor:** Yes, an important topic.

**Question:** Your staff members say that you were meeting to discuss the Red Sox Foundation and how New York fans of the Sox could contribute to their charities in Boston. Have you ever met with the New York Mets' or the New York Yankees' front office to talk about how New Yorkers can contribute—

**Mayor:** I have certainly talked to – it's a little different and I want to make sure you understood. I got the invitation the day before and it was an intriguing invitation that a bunch of folks at Goldman Sachs who happen to be Red Sox fans were having the whole Red Sox leadership in, and they said well we know you're a fan maybe you'd enjoy this. And we asked why was this happening and they said it was a benefit for the Red Sox Foundation. So it was the first time that they'd ever asked me to participate in anything. I've had a lot of conversations with the Mets leadership and the Yankees leadership over the years, on a whole host of issues. I don't think either of them have asked me to do something with their foundations. But they've certainly raised to me other things that they're doing in the community and other ways we can talk

together and work together. So, I will work happily – I spend a lot of time at Citi Field and I'm always happy to work with the Mets and even though I don't happen to go to Yankee games, I would always work with the Yankees on charity and civic issues, and I have a lot of respect for that organization. But this just literally was more a spur of the moment thing but for a great cause, they're doing really good work.

**Question:** Would you like to go to Yankee Stadium to discuss that with them?

**Mayor:** I would go to Yankee Stadium, I would go to the middle of Times Square, anywhere that would help the City of New York. Go ahead.

**Question:** Mayor, I just want to get you reaction to a lawsuit that was filed by Councilman Rory Lancman and I think an MTA board member regarding the NYPD not complying with the law asking them to turn over data about turnstile jumping. What do you think of that lawsuit? I know this has been an ongoing conversation.

**Mayor:** Yeah, I'm – I'm surprised by this lawsuit, honestly, the conversations have been going on a daily basis, it's well understood that we're close to resolution. It's been a very productive conversation with the council leadership about this and I was surprised to see a Council member decide to talk such an action. But it will not dissuade us from the work we're doing. We're going to come up with a resolution here because we're on the verge of it right now. And be able to have transparency with that data but in a way that also takes into account real security concerns.

**Question:** Are there any other people or entities given the leeway to not comply with the law until it's changed into a way that they might—

**Mayor:** This is a brand new – again, I would be careful not to mischaracterize it. It's a brand new law which I was proud to sign, which then required specific work to figure out how to implement it which is true of laws of all kind. That work has been happening steadily between the Council and the Mayor's Office and the Police Department. I think the authors of the law, understandably, because they're not police professionals, hadn't been as focused on some of the unintended consequences and the Police Department has raised them and said we have to find a way to address these and balance them. And it's been happening consistently. The conversation's been very productive and again I think we are on the verge of resolution. So we've said from day one we're going to get there and we will. Yes?

**Question:** Are you satisfied with the City's preparedness for hurricanes? We've been talking about Puerto Rico, but the city, after Sandy, set a schedule and I think that's according to our expert, Josh Robin, on it, the City's far behind on its own preparedness schedule set after Sandy.

**Mayor:** The level of preparedness today is much greater than it was at the time of Sandy. There's no question about that. We learned a lot from Sandy, we've made a lot of changes. The way we build buildings is different. A number of buildings were repaired as a result of Sandy and their mechanicals were taken out of their basements and put on higher levels. A whole lot of buildings have been reinforced in a variety of ways. We're got new barriers. The Rockaway Boardwalk is a great example, it's five-and-a-half miles long and it is also built as a storm protection barrier. There's a lot of changes that make this a much more resilient city. That said there's a huge amount of work, it's billions and billions and billions of dollars of work to do

ahead, and a lot of it will take years and I'm not sure exactly of what timeline you're referring to, but I would say from the point of view of my team, this is going to be decades of work, honestly, including some of the big projects that have been talked about with the Army Corps, like a barrier out at the mouth of the harbor. This work is going to go on for a long, long time. Every year we will get more resilient. I'm absolutely convinced. Everything that's being built is being built much more effectively than what was built in the past. And every new project that's on the water has a resiliency mindset to it, but I also want to say it's going to be a long, long haul. Yes?

**Question:** You're [inaudible] from the Mets and the Yankees [inaudible] conversations, would you actually have a sit down meeting with executives of the Mets or the Yankees [inaudible]?

**Mayor:** I have sat with the leadership of the Mets several times. I've talked on the phone with Randy Levine several times, but I want to just make sure everyone understands the context. I have not gotten a request, from either one of them, that I can remember, to do a particular thing with their foundations. I would have happily done it. I have, for example, in the case of the Mets, they've invited me to the first game of the season where they're honoring first responders or families of first responders who we've lost in the line of duty. So again, I'm very happy to participate. This thing the other day was much more ad hoc but was for a great cause, and was also, as a fan, it was absolutely fascinating. So I was happy to have done it, and if Jeff Wilpon or Randy Levine want to call me today and suggest something we can do together, my phone line is open, they have my number, I assure you. Yes?

**Question:** I wanted to ask about jointly operated playgrounds, I know there was a council hearing this week about, you know, some concerns that they're not protected the same way park land is because they're kind of in this gray area. DOE owns them but Parks run them. I just wanted to see if you had any thoughts on protecting these park lands. I know a lot of people are concerned because there is an Upper East Side park that is, you know, possibly being developed. Do you have any thoughts on it?

**Mayor:** I think the basic approach is the same whether it is parkland owned by the Parks Department or a playground owned by the DOE, we want to keep the same recreational opportunities for the community. Sometimes it makes sense and we've seen this with lots of parks from the Parks Department to say well we can do something on this particular piece of land, but we need to compensate with other land nearby to make work and to keep everybody whole and that's a good model. We have some real educational priorities we have to address in some communities and I think if you talked to parents they'll say first you need classroom space, first they need their kids to get educated and obviously Chancellor, feel free to chime in, but what we want to do in each case is find some way to compensate and balance the equation. Separately, but very important, and I want to thank the Chancellor and his team for their commitment, we're creating physical education capacity in a lot of schools and near a lot of schools that never had that before as part of a goal of making sure every school has that. Okay, last call? Yeah?

**Question:** How do you feel about the state's plan to change Sheridan Expressway to a boulevard so that you can have bikeways and you can have bridges that will [inaudible] people from the communities to get over to the water?

**Mayor:** I think it's a good idea, I haven't seen every detail, and I have talked lately to my Department of Transportation if they have any particular concerns but if you're asking the question, is it a good idea, yeah it's a good idea because what happened in cities all over America, Marsha, you've seen it, I've seen it, for years is these big highways were put through that cut off communities from each other and often with really isolating effects and I think there's been a reevaluation of that everywhere and in some places it may be impossible to turn back the clock, but I do think the Sheridan Expressway is an example of someplace where you can restore the natural neighborhood and I think that's a smart idea.

**Question:** [Inaudible] members of the community?

**Mayor:** I think for anybody in a community where their community is made whole and they can more comfortably get around to the waterfront, to parks, and not feel like a highway divides them it's a better way to live, obviously. Last call, going once, twice –

Thank you, everyone.

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