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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO HOLDS MEDIA AVAILABILITY

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Good morning, everybody. So, we know throughout this whole crisis we faced over the last six months, we know that, as New Yorkers, we're not just thinking about the physical reality, the health reality, the pain that people have been through, the challenges that people are facing, we're also thinking about right and wrong. The people of this city have real strong values and we live by those values. We care about fairness. We care about equality. We're compassionate people in New York City. We want to make sure that everyone gets a fair shot, everyone is given the respect they deserve. That's what goes through our minds in the decisions we make here at City Hall, but also the way everyday New Yorkers live their lives. So, we're working right now every hour of every day to get our schools ready for their opening next month. And why is everyone working so hard? Because it's the right thing to do. Because it's the right thing to do for our kids, it's the right thing to do for our parents. Why is everyone working so hard? Because our families are worth it. That line that I heard, that message I heard from one of the administrators at New Bridges School in Crown Heights, Brooklyn, our families are worth it. We owe it to them to get it right. We owe it to our educators to get it right. We owe it to everyone in the school community to recreate that precious place. And I always say the school, the classroom are an extension of the home for so many kids. It's the other place they live so much of their lives and it's where they go for so much support, so much encouragement. This is about New York City today, but it's also about New York City's future. So, we are focusing on doing everything we can do to get this right. And we will do everything in our power.

Now yesterday, saw something very inspiring at Bronx Collaborative High School – went to visit yesterday with the Chancellor. And one thing we wanted to see, we just wanted to see one of the Ventilation Action Teams work, doing what they do, checking to make sure everything's ready. And the way they look at a classroom and using specific standards regarding airflow and the kind of quality air that we need to make sure everyone in the classroom has. Now that classroom right there, where you see me standing in the Bronx with the Chancellor, that's a classroom that normally would have 24 to 28 students in it. This year, it will have nine students. So, social distancing is going to be taken very, very seriously. In fact, we're going to have the kind of low class sizes we could only have imagined – not that we ever wanted to get them this way, I assure you. But it's important to recognize very few students in the classroom and ventilation being checked for every single one to make sure it's right.

Now, the action teams are following up on work that's been done literally since the first week of June by the school custodial teams and School Construction Authority and by the DOE School Facilities Department. All of them have been working together, not just the last few days throughout June, throughout July, throughout August to get things ready. What's happening now is a final run through, a final set of inspections to make sure everything's right. And I liken it to the checklist before you lift off. We're making sure everything is right and anything that needs work, it will get that work. So, here is what's happened just in the last two days – 370 buildings,

370 school buildings have been fully inspected and that's happening more and more every day to make sure the buildings are already. And I'm going to say it again, if any part of the building, if any classroom is not ready, we will not use it until it's healthy and safe for everyone.

Now, I want you to hear from the experts. I want you to hear from the people who are doing this extraordinary work. So, I'm going to turn to someone who's been just a superstar, she has led the way with the School Construction Authority, building new schools, rehabbing schools, creating so much for the kids of the city, putting in those air conditioners all over New York City. So many things the School Construction Authority has done. So, you're going to hear from her, the President of the School Construction Authority, Lorraine Grillo, and the School Construction Authority Senior Director for Technical Standards, a guy who really knows this stuff and the details of this work to make sure each room has the ventilation it needs – George Roussey. So, Lorraine, George, we welcome your report.

President Lorraine Grillo, School Construction Authority: Wow. Thank you. Thank you so much, Mr. Mayor. I just want to say that in my 26-plus years as an employee of the School Construction Authority, I have never seen such an unprecedented effort. 370 buildings visited in two days. So, before I get to those statistics, I just want to say, I am so impressed by the SCA staff and our consultants who have been working tirelessly to get this done. 370 completed inspections, 247 more scheduled for today. So, as a result of those inspections, we have final reports on 99 of those buildings. And here's what we found, 92 percent of the rooms in those buildings are just fine. For the other eight percent, there are small issues that came up. To give an example, a school in Brooklyn where we found two rooms that still had windows nailed shut. That is going to be taken care of today. So, we're really excited to see what the results of the rest of these inspections are. But I do want to reiterate what you just said, Mr. Mayor, about this being a comprehensive effort. Our custodians have been working tirelessly over the summer on all different issues. They will have the ability to do CO2 testing in the buildings when the students arrive. They have done things like replaced air filters, they have done deep cleaning, all of those efforts together with the SCA's capital work and these inspections to make these buildings safe for our kids.

I do want to, if I may, mention something that I've been hearing about that people are concerned about, "tissue tests." The tissue test is actually taken directly from the CDC guidelines on infection control. And this is something that's widely used throughout the country. So, what I will do right now is turn it over to my colleague, George Roussey, who is really a professional engineer and an expert in this area. George, if you will –

Mayor: George, can you hear us?

[Inaudible]

Senior Director for Technical Design George Roussey, School Construction Authority: Alright. So, as Lorraine indicated, the tissue test is a qualitative method to see that the systems are running. So, they're actually going into every space to see that the mechanical systems are actually running. If they don't see any air movement, then they know that that particular area has to be fixed. We're also checking for operability of windows and other pieces of mechanical equipment. So, I mean, they're – I think they're going to, the teams are going to two schools a day. So, they're really hitting every classroom as far as, you know – it's actually every space

where there's students and where teachers are going to be. So, they're hitting all those spaces. So, I don't know what more I can add to that. It's just that it's a comprehensive investigation. I can't say comprehensive, but it's a look to see, to make sure that all the systems are operational. And as the Mayor indicated, if they're not operational, they won't be used until they're able to determine how to fix those units. And we've been working with DSF all summer, giving them information, and assisting them where possible as they need to get the schools operational.

Mayor: Thank you so much, George. Lorraine, did you want to add?

President Grillo: No, I – what I did want to say was, as George indicated, I mean, this is part of our role, that we have been advising school facilities along the way on air filter changes and repairs and things of that nature. So, we've been working very, very closely with the team.

Mayor: Yeah, and let me just ask – Lorraine, you said you have 26 years. George, how long have you been at SCA?

Senior Director Roussey: So, I've been with the SCA since 1990. I guess, almost when it was formed. And I've been the head of Technical Standards, which is responsible for all the disciplines, since about 2004.

Mayor: All right. So, I want to put that together and say between the two of you, you have a half-century of experience with the school buildings of New York City and George, as Senior Director for Technical Standards, obviously, no one knows more than you about what it takes to make a classroom work and be safe. And Lorraine, no one knows more about our school system than you, because you've literally built a lot of our school system and rehabbed a lot of our school systems. So, I want to thank both of you because I think it's very important that the people of our city see the extent of this effort and understand that we're all saying very clearly, if something is not right in any classroom, we're going to hold it back until it is right. But the best way we can make that clear to the people of the city is to put it all up on the DOE website. So, that will happen in the next few days. We're literally going to list the status of every single school as they go through the inspections. And we'll be adding to the list every day as more inspection results are analyzed and completed. You'll see the specific schools that have passed, and they're all ready to go. You'll see the schools that still need work. If they need to work on two classrooms, for example, that will be indicated. And, again, everything will be put out publicly because we have confidence in this process. We want people to see it and we'll make adjustments. We want everyone to understand if there's a classroom – we have this during a regular school year, even when there's not the challenges we face now – if there's a classroom that's for any reason, not right, we hold it back regularly and we work around it. And we'll certainly do that here. But I think as you heard from George, a lot of the challenges we face actually are easy to fix. And we'll keep our team on that every single hour up until school begins.

Now, I, also – so, thank you to both of you – and I also want to say, I had a very inspiring experience yesterday up in the Bronx, first of all, hearing from the principal, Dr. Brett Schneider, who really – and he's there in the back of the photo there, next to me – very inspiring leader of the school who believes that the school community can make decisions and make things happen for the good of all, and has been engaging with parents and educators throughout to figure out plans that will work. And it's quite clear, he feels empowered, his community feels empowered. I want to thank the Chancellor who created a system that empowers school communities to figure

out what works for them. But Dr. Schneider said something so powerful, he spoke with a lot of confidence about what could be done. And he said, “We cannot operate from a place of fear.” I really appreciate that. As a leader he’s saying to everyone, we have to keep moving forward, our kids need us, we’re going to find a way to get it right. And that spirit is extraordinary. And it also is a reminder of the why – why all this effort, because of the power of education, the power of public education. That gathering you see there was with a group of parents. And the parents spoke, each very personally, about what the school community meant, what it meant for their child to go to a school building, the help they would get from teachers, from guidance counselors, mental health experts, what they could only get in school that they could not get remotely.

So, I’m a believer in public education, nothing more important to the future of this city and this country than quality, traditional public education. And we got to get it right for our kids. And every day they’re not in school for a lot of kids, it causes tremendous challenges because of a lot of things they don’t have in their lives. So, when we talk about fairness, when we talk about equality, we have to understand so many kids who need some extra help, who need some support, who are dealing with immense challenges only get that help in school. They cannot get the same help remotely. That’s why thinking about this in terms of fairness and equity is so important. And when you hear the voices of parents, I mean, it was not surprising to me, but it was riveting how deeply the parents felt their kids needed in-person learning and how in-person learning would allow them to once again, gain that momentum in their lives that’s been sorely lacking these last few months. So, that’s what I heard. And it was passionate, it was heartfelt, but I want you to hear it too, from a parent who really speaks from the heart about why it matters, knows this as a parent herself, knows it as a teacher as well in our public schools. And what she said yesterday really moved me. So, I wanted you all to hear from her. My pleasure to introduce Monet Elzey. Welcome, Monet.

Monet Elzey: Good morning. Good morning, everybody. My name is Monet Elzey. I’m a parent of two children in the school system, Chami and my son, Bobby. Chami is 17 and Bobby is 12. I feel the same way as the Mayor. I want my children back in school. I feel like it’s very important to me as well as me being a teacher – hands on, I love working with children. It’s a gift to have these children back in school, getting the things that they need to learn, that hands on, you know, looking in the books, interacting with the teachers, you know, and me, myself, interacting with the children. I love seeing when the children come in in the morning and they say, “Good morning, Ms. Monet.” And the remote is a beautiful thing, but I like my children in the classroom where they can get the work that they need done and be happy at the end of the day and say, “Mommy, I learned this today.” And I’m blessed to have that opportunity for my children to be able to go to school. And the teachers teach them and they learn different things every day. And I’m happy for that as myself and my children.

Being a teacher for me is a beautiful thing. As I said, I love working with children and giving that opportunity when the children walk through the doors and you teach them, whatever is needed to be teach – from kindergarten to first grade. I teach first graders and it’s a phenomenal experience, a phenomenal experience. And I enjoy it every day. It makes my day. It makes my day when I get up and I get into the classroom and I see the smiles and I see the happiness and I see how they endure. Everything that they endure every day and when they come home and they and their mother say, “Oh, Johnny learned this and he was happy to read his book and he’s

reading his book in the morning and on the weekends.” That makes me feel good as a parent and as a mother, I mean, as a teacher, I’m sorry. And I guess that’s about it. I mean –

Mayor: Tell folks what your kids are feeling going back to school.

Elzey: Well, as I said yesterday, my daughter really wants to get back in school. She is an honor student, and she has lupus and she has juvenile arthritis, and it’s important for her because she gets the exercise that she needs with going to school, and, you know, being in that setting, being around other children and going to different classes. And as well as my son, it’s the same thing, being outside with other students, you know, the recreation that they do at the gym – going to gym, being able to be around their friends. And, you know, they can’t be around their friends, right now, remotely. So, it’s good that they interact with their friends and, you know – like you learn every – everything from each student, each child, and my children want to get back in school. You know, I’d for love them to be back in school. It’s an experience for me and an experience for them. And I’m really wanting everything to go as planned for them to get back in school come September. And I love it 100 percent.

Mayor: Great. Thank you. Thank you so much, Monet. And everyone, look, I just want to thank Monet, because, obviously, you can hear her commitment to our children and what she does to help them every day. But she mentioned what her daughter faces every day, dealing with lupus, dealing with a physical challenge and the pain that she often has to face. But one of the things that was so moving yesterday was hearing that your daughter, even when she’s in pain, wants to go to school, because she feels in school, she’s moving forward, that she’s learning and growing. She feels encouraged when she goes to school, she does not want to miss it, and the school community supports her. And that’s what I think was so clear with all the parents we spoke to yesterday, and a grandparent as well, that the kids feel supported and loved in the school building and they need that so they can keep moving forward.

So, we’re going to keep doing this work, and we’ve talked about the physical work to get schools ready, but we’re also doing the work to help the administrators, to help the educators, the teachers to get ready to do this work in what’s obviously a more complex reality than we normally face because of the crisis we’re in. Over the last days, a tremendous amount of work has been done at the Department of Education, working with the United Federation of Teachers to work through the issues of curriculum, to work through the issues of instructional guidance in a context that’s unprecedented, this blended learning model. And it was important to create a framework, to create an agreement that would allow everyone to move forward and now do the work of finalizing plans for school to begin. And then, of course, refining them as the school year progresses.

So, today, I want everyone to know that we’ve come to an agreement with the UFT on instructional guidance that will bring clarity to all educators and flexibilities to principals as they prepare how they’re going to work with their teams in this new environment. And it really helps to clarify how work will be done with kids who are in school, kids who are in blended learning and are outside of the school that day, and, of course, kids who are remote full time. Now, look, students are going to get support every single day. Under any choice a parent makes for their kid, the kids are going to get support every day. They’re going to get an education every day. But what was important was to determine a good working model for professionals to work together, to maximize what we could do for our kids. That time in the classroom is particularly precious

and that's, I think, going to be the highest impact time, but taking a team approach to make sure that kids are being reached every day in the best way possible. So, this agreement really respects our professionals, our educators, and respects their need to be able to have time to plan and time to work out their collaboration in the interest of everyone. It clarifies, of course, that there will be planning time every day for teachers, 30 minutes, at the start of the day to work out the team approach for that day and to work through how to maximize the use of technology for the good of all, while still getting the unbeatable impact of in-person learning. This is a great step to help us get everything ready and here to give you a sense of what it means and how it's going to work, the Chief Academic Officer for the Department of Education Linda Chen.

Chief Academic Officer Linda Chen, Department of Education: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. Before I begin my remarks today, I want to recognize all of our educators and their efforts since March to transform teaching and learning for all of our students. And, specifically, today for our principals and assistant principals. As a former principal in the system, I know what it's like to open up school, but certainly cannot say that I've walked the footsteps that you are currently walking. I greatly appreciate the unwavering commitment of our school leaders and also appreciate your candor and what you're experiencing in the midst of ever-changing landscapes. And while today's announcement may not answer every question you may have, it does endeavor to address some essential questions you've been asking to move forward. We have been working around the clock with our labor partners to be able to deliver conditions, to ensure that there is continuity of instruction for all of our students while also having everyone's health and safety at the forefront.

So, to everyone, our principals and their staffs out there doing tough work in planning each and every day, our whole city – our entire city commends them for their work. To our school leaders, our teachers – they're all top notch. They've taken a totally unprecedented situation and they've tackled it with creativity and tenacity. As they do, they bring us more questions about what this means for the various roles that make up the school community. And this year, asking key questions about what this means for teachers in the many modes in which they'll teach and impact our students. Blended learning students, learning in-person on-site at schools; blended learning students, learning remotely from home; and thirdly, fully remote student learning students, learning from home every day. We're happy to have worked closely with our labor partners to provide more of those answers today in the form of the new instructional guidance the Mayor mentioned. The guidance provides clarity to our principals for how to program teachers and students in all modes of instruction, blended or remote. And it delivers on our promise to families, consistency and support in the learning experience every day, no matter where a student is learning from. [Inaudible] the hours in a day, a remote student will receive live instruction to the ways that teachers can come together to coordinate and collaborate across classes of students.

Today's agreement moves us forward by providing a shared educational vision and the foundation for a strong start to the school year. We know our principals and school staffs have been working very hard all summer to get ready for September. Today, we're excited to take this next step for all of our students and provide additional clarity and support for our dedicated educators who will make this upcoming school year the greatest one yet. Thank you.

Mayor: Thank you so much, Linda. And appreciate your hard work, and your team, and everyone who worked with us through, again, all summer long, getting these pieces into place, and this agreement is going to help us move forward.

I'm going to turn to our daily indicators in a moment, but I just want to say one thing first – and it's an entirely different topic, but such a powerful and important topic, because it's really has to do with what's going on in this whole country. We're at unprecedented moment in history. This is literally a true statement – there has never been a moment like this and the entire history of this city, the entire history of this country on so many levels. And it is easy to feel pained by so much of what is happening, but I really think it's important to stop and note when out of this pain comes progress, comes a commitment to change. And sometimes in the worst crises, you also see the realization that change must happen and the commitment to do things that never were done before. So, just in the last day, we've seen something extraordinary – our professional athletes who are admired by so many Americans, and particularly by young people, taking a stand for justice, saying that the lives of all people of color, particularly the lives of African Americans must be valued. And that violence against Black Americans is unacceptable, violence that has often occurred without consequence, with impunity, that it will not be accepted anymore in this nation. And it's moving – it's emotionally moving, but it's also a sign that bigger change can and must happen. When we see so many people – by the way, across a variety of leagues, the NBA, the WNBA, Major League Baseball, Major League Soccer – when you see athletes, all different backgrounds, all different parts of the country coming together in common cause to say, Black lives matter; we must make changes and reforms; we must reform our approach to policing; we must change the way we talk about race in this society; we cannot go on like this; we will go someone better; we will get to a better place. It is a hopeful sign – it comes out of conflict, but it's a hopeful sign to see so many voices coming together for a common vision of change. And it makes me believe. And I want to say, the work of reform, it will have to go on not for days or months, but for years. It will have to be relentless, but reform will happen and change will come. And this'll be one of the moments we look at that reminds us of that fact.

Okay, everyone just a quick run through, of course, of our indicators. And we do this every single day, and today we have a good report. Number one, daily number of people admitted to New York City hospitals for suspected COVID-19, threshold is 200 patients – today, 52. And the positive COVID rate among those 52, only 7.4 percent. Indicator number two, new reported cases on the seven-day average, threshold 550 cases – today's report, only 222, less than half. And indicator number three, percentage of people testing positive citywide for COVID-19, threshold five percent – today's report, 1.39 percent.

Let me say a few words in Spanish –

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

With that, we're going to turn to our colleagues in the media and please let me know the name and outlet of each journalist.

Moderator: We'll now begin our Q-and-A. As a reminder, we're joined today by Commissioner Chokshi, Commissioner Trottenberg, CEO of the School Construction Authority Lorraine Grillo, Executive Director of the Office of Special Enforcement Christian Klossner, the Chief Academic Officer at the Department of Education Linda Chen, and Senior Advisor Dr. Jay Varma. The first question today goes to Andrew Siff from NBC.

Question: Hey. Good morning, Mr. Mayor, and everyone on the call. Today, Jumaane Williams is planning to, again, echo a call that others have made to delay the start of the school year. He says actually that a lot of your methodology and efforts over recent days have been commendable, they're just taking place too late in the summer, hurdling towards an arbitrary opening date of September 10th. I'm wondering if you have considered as a backup plan pushing back the start of school either a few days, or a few weeks?

Mayor: Andrew, I appreciate it. I've spoken at length with Public Advocate Jumaane Williams. He prepared a very extensive proposal about school opening and the Chancellor and I talked about it with him in detail, and I appreciated his analysis. Both the Chancellor and I had a different view of what would work, but I give Jumaane and his team credit – they looked at it very seriously and they offered a counter vision. But what I would disagree on his analysis is that, again, this notion that everything's happening in the last days, when, in fact, the work has been going on for months and months. And, you know, there's a difference between spin and reality. I know there have been voices out there saying that somehow everyone at Department of Education, you know, principals, custodial services, School Construction Authority have somehow taking the summer off – it's the exact opposite. People have been working harder than ever this summer throughout. They didn't get a lot of headlines for their day-after-day effort. They didn't get a lot of positive attention for all the groundwork they were laying, but these folks have been working hard all summer. I've talked to principals and custodial folks who gave up their summer to get their schools ready, did not expect it to be business as usual. They thought they owed it to the kids to go the extra mile and they have. So, I'd like all of that hard work to be respected. And what we've said today, the ventilation action teams are doing a final run through in light of the specific moment in history we're in, they're going farther and double checking everything again. And if something needs to be addressed, it will be. Final point to why school opens on September 10th, because, again, I remind everyone the law that exists in this state related to how many school days we need to achieve, the fact that our kids have been waiting to have their education resume and in-person education is irreplaceable. There's reasons for why we are committed to continue to move forward. And this is the vision that I am confident that we can have all the pieces in place so we can start serving our kids. Go ahead, Andrew.

Question: Today, Ritchie Torres, and some others in the Bronx used statistics from your office that 18 percent of families lack access to the internet and 46 percent lack access to broadband. Do you accept that premise in those numbers? And, if so, how can you address that inequality with only days to go until hundreds of thousands of folks are doing remote learning?

Mayor: I think we should separate the question of the digital divide, which is a hugely important issue and we have to do so much more in our society to address – and a separate discussion for another day is the frustration I feel with some of the companies that we've given franchises to, who were supposed to do a lot more for broadband access in the city and haven't. But what we have done, the City of New York, the Department of Education, is just go direct to the families, provide them with the technology, provide them with the – both the devices and the internet service. So, that has continued throughout and it's been free and available to all. It started in April, and has gone on continuously since, and it continues – again, any family that doesn't have yet a device or service, we will get it for them. But it's also a reminder, Andrew, that there's nothing that replaces in-person learning. You know, when you talk about all the challenges, because you can have a device, you can have service, but a kid may still not feel real agile about

using it or family members may not. It's just not the same thing as having highly trained professionals, educators in-person guiding a child, there's just nothing that replaces that.

Moderator: The next is Alex Zimmerman from Chalkbeat.

Question: Hi, everyone. So, I want to first just ask on the new guidance for schools – is there a specific amount of live instruction that students should be getting either in the fully remote or in the blended remote setups?

Mayor: Linda, do you want to speak to that?

Chief Academic Officer Chen: Sure. Alex, yes. This is something that we learned from our families from the spring and also in the summer. We delineated some minimum and maximum times for live instruction. I'll go into those numbers in just a minute because they reflect what's developmentally appropriate across grade levels. But I do want to also take the opportunity to address live instruction. So it's synchronous meaning at the same time. So when we talk about that, it's similar to if you think about in the physical classroom, where the teacher is teaching a lesson to all of the students simultaneously. And that might be sometimes what people call a mini lesson. And there are other times where a teacher is working with small groups within the physical classroom, or the teacher is walking around the classroom and pulling alongside students individually or in pairs and providing that support. So when we think about synchronous and live instruction, that's what we're talking about within the virtual space as well. So there will be some times where a student is on with all their classmates, with a teacher on the other end with video. There will be small group time. There will be individual time. Sometimes those things we call office hours where there's one to one support. In addition, we can leverage technology as well to have live interaction between students and teachers. And between students with each other as well. That could be something as fundamental as simultaneously interacting in a chatbox, to things that are more elaborate and innovative that many of our teachers have been using in terms of applications. Those would all be the kind of work we're talking about synchronously or at the same time or live. So in terms of your specific question regarding times, we also want to make sure the parents know in advance when students would need to log on. And that is also something that we reached an agreement with the UFT regarding. And lastly, the times for kindergarten through second grade, we're looking at starting at the beginning of the school year. So you'll see in the guidance that we not only consider developmentally appropriate differences, we also looked at the gradual increase of synchronous or live time over the course of the school year. So as we think about September, we're looking at the goals across kindergarten through second grade of 65 to 95 minutes. Third through fifth grade, 90 to 110 minutes. Grade six through eight, 80 to 100 minutes. And grades nine through 12, 100 to 120 minutes starting in September.

Mayor: Go ahead, Alex.

Question: Second question here is just the plan that the DOE has given the schools seems to suggest that students in the in-person learning framework will have different teachers than those who are providing the remote instruction. And so that creates like the very obvious math problem of the DOE has the same number of teachers, but students will be split into multiple places. So, you know, how from a staffing perspective is the DOE going to be able to have two sets of teachers in those different settings?

Mayor: That's a good question Alex. I'm going to Linda to give you details. But I just want to sort of give you the statement of principle. Again, none of us asked for a pandemic to say the least. But when we found that this was what we were facing we made a firm decision that we had to do the best we could for our kids. And so this is the model that allows us to hear the voices of so many parents and kids like Monet has said, who want to be back in school, need to be back in school. We're hearing that particularly strongly from parents of kids with special needs parents of kids who are English language learners. So many voices telling us it's so important to have the kids in the classroom. But we know it's going to be imperfect by definition. So I just want to say to all the educators, we are asking you to use your extraordinary skills and your professionalism and your training to work, to adapt, to figure out the best ways forward in a really imperfect environment. And honestly, that's what I've seen educators do throughout my whole life in public service and as a parent. I think educators constantly figure out solutions with each other, work with families. They're going to put their heart and soul into making this work. I don't have a doubt in my mind. But everyone understands, this is not a reality. Any of us would have wished for, but we're still going to make it work the best we can for our kids. Linda, why don't you speak to the specifics?

Chief Academic Officer Chen: So, Alex, yes, you're right. We are, as the Mayor said, in this context of a pandemic, we are dealing with a mathematical problem with variables that change from day to day. And so we know that that's what we can count on. What this agreement does do is really look to how can we have clear labor agreements as to how we can do that? And how we can provide continuity of learning for students first and foremost, in the context that we have? And that is why you see in the guidance, examples of collaboration. The Mayor spoke quite a bit today to the importance of community and collaboration. And that is what this agreement is about as well. It is leveraging dedicated time that teachers will have to collaborate between teachers in the cases where a student would have a teacher who is onsite and in-person, as well as the teacher they would be working with on the days at home in remote mode. And that is really what the guidance does. This allows – and I think you're absolutely right. Staffing has been and will continue to be something that we are monitoring closely. And we are concerned about. Absolutely the math would indicate to you that is going to be a variable we need to solve for. The agreement helps principals have the tools they need to figure out more precisely what those staffing needs will be. And more precisely how the DOE can support them in those efforts. You've heard the Chancellor say many times throughout the past months, around how we have been working on also a deployment plan. There are certified teachers that are not in school buildings that support teachers and principals. We have a plan to be able to deploy those folks, the guidance and the agreements that we came to with labor that are released today, help principals to be more precise in what those staffing needs will be. And therefore our ability as a system to be able to support them in meeting those needs.

Mayor: Thank you so much. And Alex it's just to conclude, I mean, what it does is it, and I've had this conversation with a number of principals directly. This gives them a framework to work with. They know the teachers who are coming back to their school building as Linda said, a lot of educators are now going to be put into play from other parts of the DOE who are not currently in a classroom. They'll go into a classroom. Of course, substitute teachers, teachers who are in our regional enrichment centers. We're talking about thousands of reinforcements will come into the equation now because there's now a framework that allows principals to precisely delineate

what they need to do, day by day, hour by hour. So this really will help us move forward rapidly. Go ahead.

Moderator: The next is Emma Fitzsimmons from the New York Times.

Question: Hi Mayor. I wanted to ask about the schools reopening. It seems like you're, you know, increasingly isolated in sticking to opening on time. You know, Speaker Johnson, Jumaane, the Governor has sort of said he had questions about sending his kids if they were school age. So, I'm wondering what local leaders agree with you that we have to start on time? What business leaders, local leaders, national leaders, who is sort of on your side except for, you know many of the parents who want to go back, but who are quite scared?

Mayor: Emma respectfully who's on my side? The clear majority of parents, that's who I work for. I've been around politics a long time. It never surprises me when people criticize. The more daring and difficult thing is to actually create and produce something for the people we serve. And overwhelmingly parents want us to provide in-person learning for their kids. We saw it in the early surveys. We've seen it every day since, as we've given parents choices and options. You hear it distinctly and clearly in the voices of so many parents like the parents we met with yesterday. So honestly I respect my fellow elected officials. I truly do. I listened to them. I work with them. But if all of them say one thing, but the majority of parents say another thing, I'm with the parents. It's their children. We are here to serve them and their children. Those are the voices who matter. Go ahead. Emma, can you hear us?

Moderator: Emma, do you have a follow up question?

Question: Oh, sorry. Can you hear me? I'm sorry about that. Yes. I had a question from my colleague just a second. I'm sorry. We were wondering if you could clarify your statement on the chokehold bill? Do you support changing the law and are you hoping that that passes the Council?

Mayor: So, Emma, just to make really clear, I signed the chokehold bill because the central purpose of that bill was to take what had been NYPD policy for decades and codify it into law and ban the chokehold. That was crucial. That was necessary. That is something that absolutely must continue. But there's been a lot of conversations in communities all over the city about the other reality we're dealing with, which is unfortunately a profound one. And we've been doing with it worse and worse throughout the summer. There's a huge amount of gun violence. And I've heard this from so many members of the City Council. They're deeply concerned that that issue needs to be addressed. And I know the Chair of the public safety committee, Donovan Richards looked at this issue, looked at the question about the exact wording of the diaphragm portion of that bill. And I think there's a growing recognition that a better balance needs to be struck so we can continue the work of reform. But also make sure we're fighting back against this horrible gun violence we're seeing. So I think what Donovan Richards has done is productive and important. And it's really based on the voices we're hearing from communities all over the city.

Moderator: The next is Julia from Post.

Question: Hi, Mr. Mayor. Good morning. Just directly following up on that. Can you explain to us how you see the diaphragm portion of the law directly connected to the rise in gun violence in the city and how changing that would decrease that violence?

Mayor: I think Julia, it's as simple as this – why are we having violence – I think I've said this probably a hundred times, because of a perfect storm of problems. The pandemic has unleashed tremendous challenges and frustrations. Kids don't have school. Parents don't have work. The court system only now is starting to come back to life. You name it, we've dealt with the challenge. Those are the underpinnings of why we have seen increased gun violence. We're not in a normal time. So many things have come unglued and we have to glue them back together and restore a lot of what's normal in our communities. And part of that is making sure that everyone understands how to move forward. And I think there've been honest questions and concerns about what police officers can and cannot do. And we need our police officers to have clear instruction, constantly respect the rights of the people of this city. I need to see every day more and more reform, more and more respect for New Yorkers from police. But I also need our police officers to understand what their mission is and how to go about it. They deserve that clarity and we all have to keep working together. And actually the spirit I'm hearing from people who represent communities of color all over this city is they know we need to strike a balance. We need to continue to make reform while addressing gun violence simultaneously.

Question: Okay. And then on schools, do you have a deal with the UFT to return on September 10 or not? And if not, what remains to be worked out?

Mayor: It doesn't quite work that way. It's a fair question, but I want to understand, the school system is part of our obligation to the people of this city. It's no different than policing or Fire or Sanitation. We have an obligation to provide a service to our people. They have said, the parents of this city have said they need in-person learning to the maximum extent we can provide it. That's our job to serve our people. So unions of course, we will advocate for their workers and ask for whatever changes they think are important, but that's not how governance works. The government actually decides what we need to do to serve our people. And again, we're under a legal mandate to provide a certain number of instructional days to our kids. And we know we just know, and I have not heard anyone in the unions disagree with this statement, that in-person learning is much more effective than remote learning. So we'll keep talking. We. all the unions are talking daily with the DOE. This agreement that we're announcing today, obviously came from hard work in recent days, collaborative work to get to an agreement. We'll keep talking and we'll keep moving forward.

Moderator: The next is Kala from PIX.

Question: Hello, Mr. Mayor. Good morning. You mentioned the childcare issue with 100,000 seats open from the City. Can you give us more information? You said more will be coming in the next few days.

Mayor: Yeah. Thank you, Kala. So in fact, I've been in some meetings this week about the details. The application process has already been worked on by the Department of Education to identify parents who need childcare. We're working on how to prioritize that. Obviously the greatest concern is going to be for parents who need to be at a workplace, as opposed to parents who can work remotely. Particular concern for single parents. And, you know, there's a lot of

single parents whose kids go to New York City public schools. We're going to be looking at parents who are in particular, in economic distress. You know, there's certain criteria that have to be put together to prioritize. Because everyone knows we're not going to have all the childcare seats we would ideally like, but we're going to have a lot. So that prioritization is being worked out. Application process is being worked out and we'll have an announcement on that very shortly.

Question: Okay. And a follow up to outdoor learning. I spoke with Council member Mark Treyger who said to ask other PTAs to help the less fortunate in regards to outdoor learning is the height of hypocrisy for the DOE and your office who's talked about ending the tale of two cities. And so can you tell us how many schools have been approved for outdoor learning? I know Mr. Carranza mentioned – yes?

Mayor: I think that's two different concepts, I could offer. What the Chancellor said was hundreds of schools had immediately upon the announcement, immediately applied for outdoor learning. I don't know if Linda has a new number today, but I know yesterday it was already hundreds. We expect that there's going to be very rapid approval. There may be specific things that need to be addressed. For example, if a principal wants a certain street closed off, is it a street that can be closed off? Is it the kind of street that doesn't have so much traffic or a bus route or something that could be worked out? But we expect a very high level of approval very quickly. That's a very different issue than whether a PTA provides some funding. Again, principals -- I don't know if you happen to see yesterday in the Bronx, the principal already had reserved part of the football field by the school for outdoor learning. So remember principals have sports fields, they have their playgrounds, they have their courtyards. There's a lot of areas where they already control. It has nothing to do with the PTA. And if they want a street closed off, that doesn't have anything to do with the PTA either. If the PTA wants to do something additional and special, we welcome it. But I would actually say it is exactly about fighting the tale of two cities to say that if a PTA in a wealthier community has the ability to put together substantial resources, it's only right to ask that they share with a school nearby that doesn't have some substantial resources so that they can get some of the benefit too. That's actually what we believe in. Go ahead.

Moderator: The next is David Cruz from Gothamist.

Question: Hi, Mr. Mayor, how are you doing?

Mayor: Good David. How are you?

Question: Good. We're hearing that teachers will be asking students to bring their devices for in-person learning days and work on those devices inside the classroom. So how will this be a good use of the in-person model?

Mayor: I'll start as the non-educator and turn to a great educator who can give you more. But to me as a parent, I mean, right now there's technology in classrooms by definition. I mean, kids have technology in many cases themselves. Classrooms use technology. It's part of the learning process. But what is irreplaceable is the human element. The impact of an adult, a guide, someone who helps kids understand how to get the most out of what a technology, no different than out of a textbook or, you know, a ruler or a protractor or a calculator or anything. The key is

a teacher in-person because we're human beings. We're social beings. A teacher in-person can reach a child and help them understand something. notice that they need extra help, give them guidance, make sure if they need other types of support, like mental health services it's there. So I'd like Linda to speak to it. And Monet, I'm going to welcome after Linda, if you'd like to speak to this as well. You're very welcome because I think the point, like it's not about if they have a device with them. It's about what teachers do for them. Go ahead, Linda.

Chief Academic Officer Chen: I couldn't agree more with what the Mayor just said and I know that our educators are thinking about that. How do we maximize that precious in person time and bringing devices – devices again, are there to support learning. So it might be something in an independent small group work that might be done with a device, but it really is maximizing the in-person learning time and that is what we are doing for the in-person. I would also say that sometimes in order to be able to connect students to better do their asynchronous work on a device that also helps where the student brings it with them and so the teacher understands what it is that they are working with and how to help them problem solve as well.

Elzey: [Inaudible] teacher, I think that the devices they do help, but I think like in-person is much better because you get to interact with the child, you get to find out what they need help with, what levels of work that you have to help them with to get a better understanding on what is needed, the material that you need on paper. Computers are excellent, but in-person is the best thing I feel as me being a teacher and a parent, hands on is the best thing for me.

Mayor: Thank you. Thank you very much. Do we have another from David? David?

Question: Yes I do. So the CDC is saying that there should be a MERV 13 filter in classrooms is the best way to filter contaminants. So my question –

Mayor: Just repeat it. I couldn't hear the beginning of your sentence.

Question: Oh sorry. The CDC is saying that there should be a MERV 13 filter in classrooms as a way to fight off or just till trial contaminants. So my question is what type of filter is the DOE using and is there a breakdown it can provide over the number of schools using specific filters?

Mayor: Thank you for the question. I had trouble hearing the term of art you were using from the CDC, but I know who to turn to at least. So Lorraine and George, you can speak from the schools and the physical perspective, Dr. Dave Chokshi, Dr. Jay Varma can speak about the CDC side of things. So Lorraine, George, you want to start?

President and CEO Lorraine Grillo, School Construction Authority: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. I – it is my experience that over the summer many of our custodians have replaced filters throughout, a number of different types of filters have been used. I believe MERV 13s are certainly one of those choices and I believe there are HEPA filters. George, maybe you can contribute to that a bit?

Senior Director Roussey: Yes, we've provided all that information to DSF for them to make those replacements. So you use MERV 13 when you - for any we recirculation air and our new buildings all will have them.

Mayor: Both of you, Lorraine, George, if a school needs that particular filter, you can make it available or our school facilities has them?

President Grillo: Right. School facilities has been working on that throughout the summer. So yes, I believe that they do.

Mayor: All right. We can confirm that back and doctors, you want to speak about the CDC side of this?

Commissioner Dave Chokshi, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene: Sure. I'm happy to start, Jay, so that the CDC guidance was updated last week. The updated CDC guidance specifically refers to the use of HEPA filters which stands for High Efficiency Particulate Air Filtration systems, and so that's what Lorraine alluded to and I know the Department of Education has incorporated that into their –

Mayor: Jay, you want to add?

Senior Advisor Jay Varma: Nothing else for me.

Mayor: Thank you.

Moderator: We have time for two more for today. The next is Erin from Politico.

Question: Hi there. My first question, I just kind of want to go back to basics. Can someone outline the nuts and bolts, the highlights of what is actually in this instructional guidance that you announced, for instance, does it speak to – will remote students get teachers from their own school? Will it be the same teacher doing remote and in person or is it two separate teachers? You know, what are the elements of this that are important to teachers and students?

Mayor: Yeah, I appreciate that. Erin, I'm going to start and pass to Linda. Look, again I always like to break things down to their most fundamental level. What this makes clear is how teachers can work together as a team to make sure there's as much consistency in the learning as possible. It is a complex environment, unquestionably, but again, and you understand the power of in-person learning, we want to maximize that while understanding that it's a blended model, understanding there's going to be some kids who are all remote, we have to find a way to do best by everyone. A lot of that comes down to helping principals plan out the use of their team and helping team members communicate and coordinate so it's as seamless as possible. That's the underlying principle here, but Linda, why don't you try and make it as much a day in the life as you can or as tangible as you can?

Chief Academic Officer Chen: Sure, the driver here is to ensure that there is continuity of learning for our students and with that, since there are different contexts that they will be learning in whether it's onsite or at home as part of a blended learning cohort or full time remote learning, we want it to be very clear through this guidance for students in their various contexts. What are the teacher's roles and responsibilities in accordance with the mode that the students are learning in? That way it's very clear to families, to students, as well as teachers themselves, what those expectations are. We – as I mentioned earlier – we learned a number of concerns from families around live instruction, and that was something I delineated earlier, and that's also part

of what this agreement does is solidify and be explicit about those minimum and maximum times that a family could expect. But also that is paired with what we call asynchronous or those types of the work that students are doing on their own based on their schedule and the schedule of their families. We know that this – there's a lot of partnership with families here when students are learning remotely, and so that the agreement also delineates how there will be provisions for teachers to collaborate and coordinate instruction. That's part of the day. It also delineates dedicated time during the day for teachers to be able to – parents to be able to have access to teachers as well, because we know there's a lot of coordination with families as well. And in terms of the asynchronous work, we also have agreements around how that curriculum and the standards and the materials teachers would have to support this continuity of learning for our students would take place as well. So those are all the top lines of what is in the agreement.

Mayor: Go ahead, Erin.

Question: Okay. I'll go to a different topic. About restaurants, you've said that there's no plan to allow indoor dining anytime in the foreseeable future. So I'm just wondering, is there any reason not to extend the outdoor dining beyond October 31st, you know, with the understanding that it may not work well for a lot of people because of the weather, but for those who do want to do it, you know, is there any reason not to just allow it and perhaps make a decision sooner rather than later, so folks can out their plans?

Mayor: Sure. It's a fair question, Erin. I mean, it's obviously still August, so, you know, we're over two months until the end of the planned timeline, but I think it's a fair question. We're looking at that right now. We're trying to get a sense from the restaurant community, how much interest there is in going longer. You know, it does come with obviously a certain amount of follow-up that we do if something like that is happening, a certain amount of monitoring has to happen. So it does matter that we understand together with the restaurant community what the ground rules will be. But there's definitely openness on our part to going longer if we think it will contribute something. We're also talking about next year. I announced to begin that we would have outdoor dining next year, starting June 1st going to October 31st, we're talking with the restaurant industry about whether we should move that forward a month or two. So that conversation is going on as well. And look, we're continuing to look at the indoor question. It's a very challenging question because of what we've seen around the world, but we're continuing to assess and what matters most is our health situation. If we continue to improve on the health front, like that's the gateway to being able to consider things that we can't do right now, is just continuing to have proof that we're pushing back this disease and we'll know a lot more in the next months plus as more and more people come back to work, as schools begin, you know, we'll get to see a lot about what our long-term health picture looks like, and that's going to help inform our decisions going forward.

Moderator: Last question for today goes to Linda from FOX5.

Question: Oh, great. Thanks so much, Mr. Mayor, can you hear me okay?

Mayor: Yeah, Linda, how you doing?

Question: I'm great. Thank you so much. My apologies to start off in case somebody has already asked you this I'm working from home today and there were some technical difficulties, but my

question is there are some principals in the Bronx, specifically the South Bronx, they said that they sent you a letter as well as the DOE because they're concerned about the outdoor spaces for outdoor learning because of the increasing crime and the increasing drug use. In fact, a few days ago, there was a woman that was shot to death in front of the district school's PS01 in District Seven. So they want to know if the city has a plan because in certain areas, because of the increase in crime and the drug use, they think that will be a huge distraction for the kids to be learning outside. Do you have any plan to address that issue because they don't want to be outside?

Mayor: Yeah, no. I appreciate the question. The Chancellor spoke to this yesterday when we were up in the Bronx. Linda, first of all, it's a very painful reality that in some of our communities there's been this uptick in violence and, you know, job one of course is to fight that back. I do believe it's related to fighting back to the disease, the whole crisis we're in here begins with the coronavirus, so every day we're fighting back the disease and reducing the impact of disease is another step towards getting safer overall. And obviously we've moved a lot of NYPD resources around. NYPD is working very closely with community leaders in places that have experienced the uptick in violence. We've got to go at the root cause of that.

But for the specific concern of the principals, which is real, that the answer to the Chancellor gave, I'll amplify it, it's an option if a principal wants to use outdoor learning, it is not a requirement in the least. And clearly principals can work within their school building to achieve what they need to. And as you've seen, I don't know if you've been to any of the classrooms we've visited, but the ones that I've been to, one had nine students to the classroom, another one had 10, and another one had 11, three different boroughs, three different schools. Just to give you a sense that we're going to have a situation where kids are going to be learning in safe spaces, small number of kids in the classroom. But the goal of course from the very beginning was to accommodate all kids who will be in school, within the school building. So that's how the planning has been proceeding all along. Outdoors is optional. Outdoors is additional if a principal wants to take advantage of it, go ahead.

Question: Is it [inaudible], obviously here with these particular principals, they think the outdoor option is just not doable, it's way too unsafe, but they also don't want to be in the school either because they're saying the safety protocols just aren't there, your response to that?

Mayor: No, I respect all our educators but I just disagree and I think you've heard earlier today, I don't know if you were able to hear the report from Lorraine and George, but again, you've got a really dedicated professionals who've spent the whole summer, School Construction Authority, a division of school facilities at DOE, the custodial engineers in the schools. I mean, I've been deeply involved in our school system for a couple of decades now, and I've seen how much devotion there is normally, but this year has been like a call to arms for all the folks who prepare schools, they've been putting immense work into making sure they are healthy and safe and again, it begins with things we've never seen before, nine kids in the classroom, 10 kids in the classroom, the classroom that we were in yesterday, nine versus normally 24 to 28, everyone with a face covering, cleaning every day including the electrostatic cleaning, hand sanitizer in every room. These are extraordinary layered precautions. So I know that this is going to add up and make our school facilities very safe for our kids and I think adults have to show strength in respecting that our parents desperately need their kids to get this support and it's up to all of us to serve our parents and serve our kids.

Well, with that, everyone, look, it also comes back to the whole reason we have public schools and I want to speak to that, but before I do just a quick programming note to let folks know that there is not a morning press conference scheduled for tomorrow, but we will be back on Monday. So everyone can be aware of that. But let me talk about public education as we close because nothing to me has been more important in my life's journey, and I think a lot of people could say, that I am blessed, my wife, Chirlane, blessed to have had a public education that gave us so much. We all can think of the educators in our lives. I can remember teachers, principals who did so much for me. I know Chirlane feels the same way. I saw it with our children. The transcendent impact that great educators make, and they can do some of that online, but only some of it, the real way to reach a child is in-person with all your heart and soul, and that's what educators do. But I think we need to think about why public education matters so much. It is one of the great foundations of a good society, a decent society, a compassionate society, a democratic society. We are also aware at this moment of history that we value our democracy more than ever. Well, you know what, nothing is underpinning of democracy more than public education and the idea, the egalitarian idea, the idea that everyone matters, that everyone is served no matter who they are for free, what is more powerful than that?

So, in the end, I don't just think of public schools as buildings. And I don't even just think of them as collections of people or folks who happen to have a job in education. I think of them as communities that represent the best of us, that provide hope, that really give people a sense of how much goodness there can be in the world, and when I listened to those parents yesterday, they talked about for a lot of kids, the best part of their day, the best part of our lives is when they walk through the door of that school building, no matter what other challenges that confront. One of the parents talked about kids in shelter and say, when they walk through the doors of the school, they leave the shelter behind and they can imagine a life beyond the shelter. Another parent said something beautiful and said a lot of kids are dealing with a lot of pain right now, a lot of kids are dealing with a lot of poverty, but when they walk into that school, that is the light of their day. That is their hope and we owe it to our kids to give them that hope. Thank you, everybody.

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