

THE CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
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CONTACT: pressoffice@cityhall.nyc.gov, (212) 788-2958

TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO HOLDS MEDIA AVAILABILITY

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Good morning, everybody. We have a lot to go over today. Chancellor Carranza is here and we're going to be making an important announcement related to education. But first, let me speak to the report that came out this morning from our Department of Investigation – a very, very important report, looking back on the protests in May and June. It is a clear, blunt, clear – objective report, an honest report. I want to state my full support for the conclusions and the recommendations in this report. I want to thank Commissioner Margaret Garnett and the whole team at the Department of Investigation. We needed objective, unsparing look at what happened in May and June. We needed to understand what went right, what went wrong, what needs to be different, what needs to be better. I certainly take full responsibility for the issues that are raised in the report and the changes that we have to make. So, I asked for an independent review, I've gotten an independent review, and I support that review and its findings.

We've got a lot of work to do. I am confident we can do that work. We will implement the recommendations in the Department of Investigation report, but we're going to go farther than that. The work of reforming the NYPD, of deepening neighborhood policing, of changing police culture – that work must intensify and it will in the year 2021. A lot is already being planned that will be unveiled in the coming weeks. But the bottom line is we can never accept a broken status quo. We can never go back to a past that didn't work. COVID – the COVID era has taught us that so clearly. And we need to do better and we will, and that means a commitment to fighting disparities and inequality in every part of the life of New York City. And that certainly takes us to education, where if you're talking about the problems of disparity, if you're talking about structural racism, certainly policing is not the only area to talk about. There are many areas to talk about and education must be front and center. There has been so much that needed to be addressed in education in New York City. And from the beginning, what I tried to focus on was a very simple concept, equity and excellence – that we needed to profoundly change the distribution of resources. I like to say very bluntly, our mission is to redistribute wealth. A lot of

people bristle at that phrase – that is in fact the phrase we need to use. We have been doing this work for seven years to more equitably redistribute resources throughout our school system. That means Pre-K for All, 3-K for All, Advanced Placement courses in every high school, including those that never had a single one. It means changing school funding formulas. There are so many things that we've tried to do to profoundly rebalance the equation – community schools, focusing on schools that help the most in communities that had not been invested in. That work will continue this year, for sure – this hardest of all school years. But starting in September, the Chancellor and I announced our 2021 Student Achievement Plan, which is going to focus on closing the COVID achievement gap and ensuring that there is fairness for our kids, support for them, but with a special focus on the 27 neighborhoods most deeply affected by COVID. And those are Black communities, Latino communities, Asian communities that bore the brunt. So, this work has been going on in a lot of different ways over the last seven years. It has to intensify now, given all the lessons we've learned during this most painful of years.

As we look beyond this year, we understand that there are many, many tools, many things we can do differently, and it's time to start using every tool at our disposal to address inequality and to improve the education of all children. And those two things go together, addressing inequality, stopping disparity, and improving education for all – that's one continuous mission. So, today, we're announcing changes to our high school and middle school admissions policies. And I think these changes will improve justice and fairness, but they'll also make the process simpler and fairer, particularly given what we're dealing with this year and all the results of the coronavirus that have changed the way we have to do things. So, beginning right away – and this will be for the 2021-22 school year, but the admissions process, obviously, will be starting now – for middle schools, there'll be a one-year pause for screens – for screened schools for those criteria used in “screened schools.” Those criteria will be put on pause for next academic year and for the admissions process happening now for high schools, we will eliminate geographic priorities over the next two years, thus giving a much bigger swath of the city, an opportunity to experience some of our great high schools.

We also be expanding diversity planning to all 32 school districts in New York City – that will happen over the next four years. Right away, we're going to get five more districts going in that effort. The districts that have done that work have seen extraordinary results. District 3 and District 1 in Manhattan, District 15 in Brooklyn – my district, where I started out as a community school board member – have had tremendous success with diversity programs, with efforts to make schools, better for everyone and more inclusive of everyone. And they've shown it can work for everyone. So, you're going to see a lot more of that starting now and in the next year, and the years ahead. Here to give you a sense of how this will all come together, our Chancellor Richard Carranza.

Schools Chancellor Richard Carranza: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. This has been a year of new and difficult choices, testing our collective strength and endurance as we faced the unknown together. We've had to re-invent the building blocks of public education in the nation's largest school system from how to go to class, to a grading policy, attendance and everything in between. As Chancellor, it's my responsibility to deliver the highest-quality education possible to each and every child in this city, so that they are prepared for successful, productive life and empowered with the skills that they need to chase their dreams. There are inequities in our city

and in our school system that have been exacerbated this year by the COVID-19 health crisis and has had – and this COVID-19 health crisis has had a disproportionate impact on our communities of color, our immigrant families, the students whose parents never had the option to work from home, and so many more. The health crisis is also interrupted so many of our normal school year practices as we accommodated it's unprecedented wake, including a lack of State testing this year, a revised approach to grading and attendance policies to meet the moment in time. And we took the time to hear feedback and work through this complex and important issue to make sure that we got this right. So, I'm appreciative of all of the students and the families and schools that have engaged with us since last spring and over the summer, literally hundreds and hundreds of town halls and meetings. And I want to thank you for your patience as well as we've crafted this new policy.

Building on this administration's commitment to equity, we're so proud to announce a common-sense approach. Number one, directly – it will directly address the current circumstances attendant to the pandemic. And, number two, this will make it simpler and fairer as a process for our families to be admitted to schools that have already gone through so much during this pandemic. So, for middle schools with screens – all screens will be paused one year, because the screens included the use of State exams, which we don't have those exams anymore. And they were canceled due to COVID. We also don't have the grades or the attendance that we can compare to previous years. Using data from the year prior when rising sixth graders were seven or eight years old, and in their first experience of taking the State test, it's untenable and it's unfair to students. District priorities will still apply. These are young children and during the extensive admissions-focused community engagement that we conducted in the spring and the summer, we heard loud and clear that families requested that we keep the district priority to allow young children to go to a school closer to their home. Common sense – so we're keeping them in place.

For schools that have more applications than seats, admissions will be decided through a lottery-based system. For high schools with screens, we're eliminating geographic priorities for admissions over two years, as the Mayor – as you've announced. In the first year, we'll start with district priorities. And, in the second, we'll extend to all other geographic priorities, like borough residents. These geographic screens have kept too many students out of the high schools of their choice. And this is an important step to open back up so that access and opportunity to your high school options aren't limited by where you live. For remaining screens at the high school level, we invite schools to unscreen now. If they and their school communities wish to do so, we will support you. If they wish to maintain academic or other screens, they will use the previous year's State tests, previous year's grades, and the grades from the first part of last year for their screening criteria. And the rubric process – the criteria that is used to rank students will be more transparent than ever before. We're requiring all schools to publicly post their rubrics on myschools. DOE Central will run the ranking process to be faster, fairer, and much more transparent. We also heard that loud and clear from all of our engagement sessions. The specialized high school admissions test – the SHSAT – will continue, as required by State law, and registration will open on December 21st for the SHSAT.

Now, I know this is a lot to take in at once for our family. So, our enrollment team will be offering more support than ever before. And in multiple languages, all rising middle and high

school families will receive additional detailed updates on how this will impact them and to help them find an excellent school that is right for them. We remain at the ready to help in any way possible and these changes will help ensure that our classrooms reflect the great diversity that is New York City. And it's also a true representation of the values that we hold dear as a city, that equity, inclusivity and accepting nothing less than excellence for all children is at the cornerstone of what we do. Making these changes helps us meet this challenging moment when our children need us the most. And by lifting up all children, in all schools, we're able to chart a bold path forward. Mr. Mayor, this is not only the practical thing to do, this is the right thing to do.

Mayor: Amen. Thank you so much, Chancellor. Chancellor, thank you. You put an immense amount of time and energy into determining the right way forward here under extraordinary and challenging circumstances. And I want to thank you. I want to thank Deputy Chancellor Josh Wallack. I want to thank your whole cabinet, they put a lot of energy into figuring out the right way to do this going forward. And this is an action based on this year, but it has a lot of ramification for the future. Also, tremendous, thanks to First Deputy Mayor Dean Fuleihan and his team who really focused on how we get this right.

Everyone, the Chancellor clear that based on current state law we will be administering the specialized high school exam. I want to emphasize that timeline registration for the exam begins this Monday, the 21st of December and the test administration will begin on January 27th. There'll be a lot of information coming out to make sure everyone who wants to participate gets the information they need. The Chancellor and I continue to feel that we need a better way going forward on specialized high schools. I want to make sure it's crystal clear. I still believe the status quo in our specialized high schools is broken. I don't think it's inclusive and fair. I think we need to do better. We understand to do that, we will have to have common ground with communities all over the city. We'll have to listen to people, work with people, obviously see if there's something our legislators in Albany feel are comfortable with. But it's important to let people know that process will continue as it has been. And when [inaudible] it's also important to say we can do better in New York City.

Okay. Let me move to a couple of other quick things – again, so much going on, but let's take a moment to reflect on the last 48 hours or so. We came out of the storm. I think the city has come out of this storm very smoothly. I want to really thank everyone at the Sanitation Department and Emergency Management. You did a great job. Special appreciation to New York Strongest, our Sanitation workers who are out there all night, braving the elements to make sure that our streets were clear and safe for all of us. They did a great job. Congratulations, guys – job well done. Thanks again to everyone at Emergency Management who coordinated, kept us all informed, made sure things kept moving. The snow did not affect something that couldn't be more important – the number one topic right now, vaccine, and the distribution of vaccine. The snow did not affect the vaccine distribution and the vaccine schedule. Vaccines were administered as scheduled yesterday in health care facilities. New vaccinations since yesterday morning, almost 4,000 – number to-date, over 9,000. Again, this is a small beginning compared to where we will be going over the coming weeks. But what we're seeing is continued good results from these vaccinations process is going smoothly. It will take off and intensify in the coming days and weeks. In the meantime, we all are dealing with a real challenge, as our indicators make clear, and we all need to focus on wearing masks, on social distancing, avoiding gatherings, not having

big family gatherings, not traveling – all of this matters and these indicators will continue to make clear why.

So, let's go over them. Number one, daily number of people admitted to New York City hospitals for suspected COVID 19 – now, this is actually a pretty good report – today's report, 158 patients. More than we want, but well under the 200-patient threshold. That's good, but here's, what's not so good – the hospitalization rate per 100,000, now 3.1 percent. That's too high, we want to be under two. New cases, through the roof, honestly – 2,805 when you do probable and confirmed together. Way too high, we want to get under 550. We've got a lot of work to do there. And the percent positivity continues to increase, seven-day rolling average – the next indicator – is 6.16 percent – 6.16. That is way too high. We got to get under five. And, everyone, I will keep saying it – everyone has to participate. What you do makes a huge difference.

A few words in Spanish –

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

With that, let's turn to our colleagues in the media. Please let me know the name and outlet of each journalist.

Moderator: Good morning, all. We'll now begin our Q-and-A. As a reminder, we're joined today by Chancellor Carranza, Dr. Katz, Acting Sanitation Commissioner Edward Grayson, Deputy Chancellor for Early Childhood and Student Enrollment Josh Wallack, and Senior Advisor Dr. Jay Varma. First question today goes to Jill Jorgensen from NY1.

Question: Hey, Mayor. Thanks so much for taking my question. So, on the admissions issues, I guess a question – I understand the rationale of middle schoolers being younger and not wanting to use their test scores from, you know, third grade for middle school applications. But I guess, I'm hoping you can expand on why you're leaving academic screens in place for high schools when you're getting rid of them for middle schools? And also, whether you think that this change for middle schools will be permanent or if it will be just one year?

Mayor: I'll start and turn to the Chancellor. The change is for the next year, but we're going to continue to evaluate and we're going to see what happens next as a result of COVID, what happens with State tests and other factors. So, we're going to look for the potential of other changes, depending on what we see happen in the next few months. This is a step in a bigger process. There's no question about it. We need a lot more change when it comes to admissions, but we want to do it based on the facts and the circumstances. So, I think the simple answer on high school versus middle school is, middle school just wasn't viable. There was no way to do fair evaluation with a screen this year. High schools, there's more factors to deal with for this year. That may not be so true, going forward, but, for this year, we still thought it was true. Chancellor?

Chancellor Carranza: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. I think you hit the nail right on the head. So, Jill, we just have more large longitudinal data for high school students. As I mentioned, for middle school students, where we would be having to use data where third grade test scores – that's the

first year they sit for the State summative tests. So, it's just – it's not – it's just not educationally sound. But we do have other data points for the high schools and that was factored into the decision. Go ahead, Jill.

Question: Thank you. And on a completely different topic, last night there was some guidance issued by the SLA, regarding restaurants and bathroom access for patrons at restaurants who are dining outside, saying that they shouldn't be allowed indoors to use the bathroom. It seems that that policy changed pretty quickly after a bit of uproar from diners who might have to use the restroom. And I'm just hoping you can walk us through what the – what happened there? How that policy came to be put in place and then how it came to be changed so quickly.

Mayor: Jill, I'll give you the clearest quote of the day. Every one of us needs to use the restroom sometimes. So, yeah, there's no question that was a mistake. I don't know the nuances of how it happened. It's just stupid. Obviously, people need to use the bathroom and, if you're patronizing a restaurant, you have a right to use the bathroom. That's been cleared up. That's been put out publicly that that was a mistake. Sometimes common sense has the rule today. So, to all New Yorkers who go to a restaurant – yes, you can use the bathroom. Go ahead.

Question: The next is Christina Vega from Chalkbeat.

Question: Hi, Mayor. Thanks for taking the question. So, it sounds like there are not any specific integration measures that are being put into place to replace screening or the district priorities. And so, without those, do you hope or think that meaningful change towards integration is possible?

Mayor: Yeah, Christina, I always think there's very clear movement here. The minute you go to a lottery system and you're encouraging anyone and everyone who is interested in school to apply, and we're going to be doing that. We're going to be out there encouraging kids to know about all their options, helping parents know about all their options. I think that clearly has a diversity impact. When you're inviting schools to end their screens entirely and we'll support them if that's what they choose to do, that has a diversity impact. If you're saying to districts, as we have seen so successfully District One, District Three, District 15, that grassroots diversity efforts have a tremendous lasting impact. We want to support them in doing that. We know it's already had a huge impact and the more districts that participate the better. And I really believe when you get a community dialogue going, when you through the local school board, people engage and understand how you can have better and better schools and more and more diversity in the classroom at the same time, that's actually what creates lasting change. So all of that is baked in here. And as we said, based on what we see in the coming months vis-a-vis standardized testing from the State, et cetera, more changes are available to us as we go forward, go ahead, Chancellor.

Chancellor Carranza: Spoken like a true local school board member Sir.

Mayor: I'm a believer.

Chancellor Carranza: Yes to everything the Mayor said. In addition, it's important to understand that this isn't just one moment in time, we have five districts that currently are actively engaged in the diversity planning process. Over four years, as the Mayor has announced, we will have all 32 districts that will have engaged in a community-based diversity development process as well. And then the sheer fact that when you remove barriers and you know, New York City has had open enrollment for years, but it's never truly been open. Because you've had a series of screens that have locked certain kids out of those opportunities. At the middle school level, we now will truly have open enrollment. And that in and of itself will allow just a greater number of students to look at schools that perhaps they wouldn't have looked at before.

Mayor: And one other point, really important because I talk about when I was a, what we used to call a community school board when I was there in District 15 years ago. Now, community education councils, the CECs. I just want to thank everyone who's a member of the CECS. It takes a lot of work. It is not, you know, not easy, tons of work. People give of themselves for free to do this work, makes a huge lasting impact. The fact is when you engage community leaders and they really have a dialogue with the community, you get the best possible outcome. Where people get it, they feel it, they know they were part of it and it has lasting impact on change. We really want to foster that. Go ahead, Christina.

Question: Well, I'm just thinking about District One which had the first city or district wide diversity plan for its elementary schools. They had a peer choice system. The schools were still very segregated there and now they've got a diversity set aside. But sort of to jump off of your last point there and lasting impact. I'm wondering, you know, the middle school changes are only one year. And you keep talking about the future, the possibility for future changes, but sort of long-term what do you hope to accomplish here? Or what is the ultimate goal? Can you talk about you know, where you hope this leads?

Mayor: Yeah Christina, this is clearly a beginning. And what I think is clear is that unfortunately screens have had the impact of not giving everyone equal opportunity. And this is not our future. Right now, we want to be very methodical and thoughtful about how we move forward. We want to work with school communities. We want to listen to educators and parents, but what is clear is our past involves too much exclusion. Our past involves too much inequality. We need to move to a different place. So, the status quo in New York City public schools cannot continue. Obviously, I feel that very deeply with specialized high schools as well. This is a step because it makes sense this year for all the reasons we've outlined. But it's also going to give people a chance to start to experience a new way. And I think as people experience it and see the virtues, there will be more and more faith in the changes. And I think that buy-in, and that faith really matters. People will see that the goal has to be a high-quality education for all children and diverse school communities. Those two ideas have to come together for the city to live up to its promise.

Moderator: A quick programming note. We're also joined today by DOHMH Deputy Commissioner Dr. Hillary Kunins. The next question is Jessica Gould from WNYC.

Question: Hi. Yeah, I just wanted to follow up on the last question. In terms of the middle school screens, how do you respond to those who say that putting a temporary pause on the

screens instead of eliminating them all together or the high-school screens is passing the buck to the next mayor?

Mayor: I think this is again a really smart action to take now. We will have further decisions going forward because there's a whole year ahead, this administration, the work I'll be doing with this Chancellor to determine what makes sense for the future. There's a lot still to play out here. But we do believe, and we've seen the good impact of doing things step by step. And again, getting people acclimated to the changes, getting their buy-in, getting their feedback, figuring out the best way to do things. So, this is the step that makes sense now. And then as we evaluate how this goes and we evaluate obviously the other things that we're learning from COVID, the other impacts of COVID, we're going to be able to take additional actions. By the time that I leave the mayoralty, I think we will have put the city on a very different course, certainly vis-a-vis screen schools. Certainly vis-a-vis our grassroots diversification efforts through local community education councils. We're going to keep working on specialized high schools too. And again, I understand that can only happen with the Legislature, but I'm going to keep saying that's also a broken status quo that needs to change. Go ahead, Jessica.

Question: In a video you made this morning talking about the DOI report, you said that the report showed that choices were made that weren't good choices it turns out, causing problems. So were any members of the NYPD's leadership or commanders who made those choices being reprimanded, disciplined, reassigned or fired?

Mayor: Yeah. Jessica, let me start. Thank you for the question. Let me start by saying, I want to urge all New Yorkers, please read this DOI report. It is very thoughtful. It really shows the whole picture, including the complexities, the challenges of that moment, the unprecedented nature of the moment, the fact that we were dealing with real challenges in terms of violence from a few, but unfortunately a few that made a big impact. But also, the demands for justice that we were hearing from, you know, tens of thousands of peaceful protestors and the need to respect that. It really captures the moment and it's worth reading. And I also ask everyone, please look at the video that I put out in response which is available on all our social media here, the City. What's clear to me, I'm taking my responsibility for mistakes that were made and decisions that turned out to be wrong. I know the Commissioner also joins me in that. We talked about it at length, we accept fully, the report and its recommendations. We will implement the recommendations. We're definitely going to look at actions of individual commanders down to the precinct level. But I think it's fair to say that what's being pointed out here is not so much time for retribution, honestly, but time for change. People were dealing with an incredibly difficult situation. They were trying to make good decisions under very difficult ever-changing circumstances. None of us have ever experienced this many protests without traditional protest organization and leadership ever changing, ever moving. Plus, some of the acts of violence that were interspersed, that had nothing to do with the peaceful protestors, but unfortunately got interspersed. I think everyone was trying to make sense of it. I think everyone could have done better. So, this is not to me about, should someone be fired? This is about, we all have to learn from it. We all have to embrace the changes. If there's anyone in leadership of the NYPD who does not accept these changes, then they shouldn't be in leadership. But based on what I've seen, the conversations we've all been having since the protests, I've met with the police leadership many times, and also

response to this report, I think we all acknowledge our responsibility and the need to make change.

Moderator: The next is Alison Kayden from PIX.

Question: Yes. Hi, Mr. Mayor. I just want to follow up on the restaurant regulations. I know it was walked back about using the bathroom, but what about restaurants that have backyard gardens or rooftop dining? You have to walk through the restaurant to get to those outdoor spaces. The current regulations as they are now does not allow for that. So, what happens to those restaurants?

Mayor: Again, I'm going to speak from common sense. Clearly if you are trying to get to a rooftop or a garden, you've got to walk through someplace to do it. You should walk through and be allowed to walk through. You should be wearing your mask, practicing other safety measures. But that's just common sense. I'll again, let's be fair to everyone who's trying to come up with these rules. It's all been against an ever-changing backdrop and there's a lot of complexity. And we all cannot wait for this vaccine to be widely distributed so we can go back to a much simpler situation. But if it's not clear in those rules, it should be made clear. Yes, of course you have to be able to walk through to get to the garden or the roof. Go ahead.

Question: So, do you expect, I mean, do you expect new rules to be written up and put out, just so people have that for frame of reference?

Mayor: Again, this is, remember this derives from the State. We've been working closely with the State anytime there's something that has to be resolved. I think the basic answer is yes. I do expect the State to clarify that. I have every reason to believe they will. We will certainly encourage them to get that out immediately and clearly. Go ahead.

Moderator: The next is Yoav from The City.

Question: Hi, Mr. Mayor. So, I saw that you apologized in that video you recorded. Just wondering if you can specify exactly what it is that you're apologizing for?

Mayor: Well, listen Yoav, I made the video because I really wanted to respond very personally. And again, I want to urge everyone to please take the time to look at it because I think it covers a lot of ground that people need to reflect on. And I wanted to share with the people of this city. So I read that report and I literally expressed my feelings after I read it. It makes clear that we should have had a better strategy, that we should have understood some of the realities that were happening, even if they were different. That we needed to communicate better. I think that's true of me as the mayor. I think it's true of the police leadership. I think it's true of the way that police on the ground were handling the protests. We really missed an opportunity given the tremendous frustration that people had after the murder of George Floyd, to try to exhibit a more understanding. But granted against a backdrop that was really tough. There was violence from the very beginning, again from a few. But it was really wrong. It was bad. It was hurting people. It was hurting officers. It was wrong. There was looting. That we had not seen anything like that

in many years. It was very hard to make sense of. But it was still our job to try to sort it out. I don't feel that I did good enough. That's why I apologized. Go ahead.

Question: And the report notes that NYPD used a tactic, a broad disorder control approach that was essentially much more forceful in trying to control and make arrests than necessary. That seems like a pretty significant error to employ the wrong tactic that leads to much more aggressive policing? Which is the criticism that many people in the public were making about the police's response. Are you going to make any effort to find out how such a significant error could have been made? Who made it? And are you going to hold anyone accountable for it?

Mayor: Absolutely hold all of us accountable. It starts with me and the Commissioner. But I want to be clear, the way to change it is literally to accept the report and accept the recommendations and implement them. The protests started differently than anything any of us had experienced. Again, there was a very small subset within the protest that created the dynamic we had not seen before. And then it evolved in a matter of days into a whole different reality. Again, with those horrible few days of looting, having nothing to do with the peaceful protest. It was ever changing, ever moving. The decision to address that from a disorder control point of view, you can understand where that came from given everything was happening. But it turned out to be the wrong decision. And it's one now that we can reflect on and see and do differently and do better. Again, I am saying to everyone in the NYPD, everyone needs to accept the results of this report. Everyone needs to implement them. I will hold you accountable. If there's anyone in leadership of the NYPD who reads that report, disagrees with it, won't accept the recommendations, they should leave now. But I don't believe that's the case. I believe that certainly every leader in the NYPD that I've had the conversation with about the protests and what we learned, has said we need to do things differently. And we already were doing more training and changes. This report makes it just abundantly clear what we have to do. So I'm focused again on how we move forward. And I'm going to work with NYPD leadership to implement every one of those recommendations.

Moderator: The next is Michael Gartland from the Daily News.

Question: Good morning, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor: Hey Michael, how are you doing?

Question: I'm okay. So, on one particular point from this DOI report, I wanted to ask you about. The report talked about your messaging and the administration's messaging on the curfews and about, you know, how the curfew would not be enforced against peaceful protestors. The report says these statements weren't helpful on multiple levels. Then it goes on to elaborate why. How would you handle that differently knowing what you know now? And, you know, in light of the report, which you've said, you agree with the totality of?

Mayor: Yeah, I do agree with it but I also will say, and I've said this, including in the video, there's some areas where I have a different perspective than the folks who wrote the report. They are right that there was a pure problem of consistency there. They're absolutely right. Because we said here's a curfew and only people who should be out are essential workers. But then folks

wanted to keep protesting. And we had a choice of course, we could have said okay if you're out protesting we're going to arrest every peaceful protestor. But that did not make sense morally. It didn't make sense practically. It didn't make sense, given the extraordinary heartfelt feelings that people had about the need to change policing. So, we had to create a kind of a very challenging, subtle mix of approaches to try to get through. Because the reason for the curfew was not peaceful protest. The reason for the curfew was the looting and some of the violence we had seen. In the end, the curfew did help us manage that and move forward. But there is a contradiction there. And I own that contradiction but I would also say we got the outcome we needed, ultimately, which was to bring peace to the city. To do it without the horrible, horrible things we saw in so many other cities. I want to keep this front and center. I said it many times after, but I got to say it again. Other cities, unfortunately, tragically had days and days of looting, or they had police precincts burned, or they had protestors killed, or horrible violence against officers, or rubber bullets or tear gas, or the National Guard on their streets. We did not have that. And the report makes that clear. We did not do good enough. There's no question, but we did some things much better than many other places. But that decision came with an inherent contradiction. Going forward, I think we now know how to handle things, hopefully in a way where we would never even have to consider a curfew. So that would be the big lesson to me. If we work with communities, we deepen neighborhood policing. If God forbid, we ever end up in a situation again, where some small set of people is trying to do violence, my hope and dream is that the community will join the police in turning against those people and isolating them and helping us ever avoid a situation where we would need a curfew. Go ahead.

Question: All right, thank you. So, my second question has to do with the – you've said numerous times that, you know, these were unique circumstances when it comes to the protests, which I think most people can agree on. There are a couple of things that jumped out at me in this report is perhaps more easy to than others. You know, we all know tempers were high. This was a very emotional period but there are two things in here that jumped out. You know, one was the fact that there was a lot of - and this was reported a lot – a lot of police officers not complying with a mask wearing guidance. The other was that you had a lot of police covering up their badges. Now, you know, some of the things that that happened, you know, we might be able to attribute to tempers, emotions, the unique situation, but those two things jumped out as pretty easy to address and so I guess my question for you is, why weren't commanding officers telling the police under them this is not acceptable? And so moving forward, is that something we can expect in the future that commanding officers will make this abundantly clear that you can't do this?

Mayor: Yeah, absolutely. Michael, I really appreciate the question. I especially appreciate it because you put it in full context, to say emotions and tempers were high is absolutely right, but it only begins to describe what people were feeling like after months of the pandemic and being cooped up and then seeing one of the most grotesque acts of injustice with the murder of George Floyd and the pent up frustrations of years of feelings that, you know, there was still not fair and just policing and there needs to be, there's so many things that came together. I think the level of emotion and anger, frustration was one of the highest I've ever seen in, you know, decades, decades upon decades. I think it's almost unprecedented and I think that affected everyone. Also, I think protestors were in so many cases felt unfairly treated by police. I think police were suffering from the reality that there were some protesters that physically attacked police in very

horrible and dangerous ways. There were constant horrible, just grotesque, language applied to so many police officers. It wasn't fair to anyone.

And so in that context, I think there was so much to try and deal with that a focus on some of these issues that you raised didn't get the attention it deserved. I want to say about covering a badge, absolutely unacceptable, absolutely will lead to discipline. To this day, I would say if anyone has specific evidence of an officer having covered their badge, you know, video, photos, anything specific, but it does need to be specific, we will pursue that, there will be discipline. Mask wearing just has to happen. I understand a lot of people had trouble with mask wearing in the beginning, were resistant to it, confused by it. I know sometimes people would take off the mask to, you know, take a drink of water or whatever didn't put back on by mistake. But that still is not the point. Our public officials have to model good behavior. So, from this point on, a 100 percent, and it should always be the case. You cover up your badge, there's going to be discipline. You don't wear a mask. There's going to be consequences. There has to be consequences. That's the way we need to proceed. And the point, which again, and I feel this, the Commissioner feels this, the report is saying a really powerful, common sense thing. You earn respect by showing respect. If police do what neighborhood policing is all about, and this is why six years of evidence of neighborhood policing, we know it works. We have to go right back to it more deeply. You address a community member by first name, with respect, with appreciation. You say, thank you to people, you say good morning to people. You answer their questions politely. You act like you owe it to the resident of a community to treat them with respect. You will get respect back. And I think that's what the vast majority of our officers understand. And that's what neighborhood policing is all about. And that's not what people felt during the protest and that is a lesson to us. We can never have that happen again.

Moderator: We have time for two more for today. The next is Leslie Brody from the Wall Street Journal.

Question: Hi there and thanks for taking my question. As you can imagine, my inbox is already filling up with emails from folks who were saying, oh, here's another nail in the coffin of New York City schools. People are going to leave. My child worked really hard in third and fourth grade because we said that would give him or her more say in his middle school choice and now the rules of the game are changing, and I understand that the virus has changed the rules as well. But what do you say to those parents who feel like, you know, they wanted their kids to earn their way into a sought-after school?

Mayor: Leslie, I appreciate the question. I'll start and the Chancellor I'm sure will jump in on this too. I, look – I'll start as a parent, my kids applied to a specialized high school, screened schools, I went through the whole process and I'm someone who believes that we need change. And we need change because we should not live in a world where we say, you can only have one thing or another thing. If we say the price of a quality education is segregation, well, that's ridiculous. If we say we want everyone in the same classroom together, but we don't care about the educational quality, that's ridiculous too. The goal is Equity and Excellence. This is the core concept we've been applying for seven years and it works. You provide educational opportunity, students rise to the occasion, teachers rise to the occasion. You give everyone a chance to learn

together. They benefit from it. They gain from it. It's an education unto itself for people to learn together and get to know other. It's our future.

So I understand the emotions of parents who believe there was one particular way to do things and then see that changing, that for them could be difficult. I really do, but I think we've all been sold a false premise. We can actually do both. We can have quality schools and schools where we all learn together. And that's what we will continue to build. The 2021 Student Achievement Plan is all about that. More teacher training over these years is all about that. Starting at the foundation with pre-K, 3-K, that's all about that. All of these things help us create that reality. So to the parents who want to get into certain schools, just love certain schools, apply to those schools, the child's preference is still going to have the number one impact on what schools you get into and recognize there may be more good schools for your child than you realize. I learned that in the application process, there were many, we have so many good schools, so many good middle and high schools, so much choice. Sometimes parents just need to be exposed to that greater choice and it gives them a lot more comfort when they see that, and that's our job to help them see that, to work with them. Go ahead, Chancellor.

Mayor: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. Leslie, I just think this – you can look at it many different ways, but what I would ask parents to look at it is this is going to create more opportunities for students from across the city to go to more and more schools. So, effort on behalf of any student, any student that's putting in that effort, I'd say to those parents you're teaching them a very good lesson, that we do have to work hard. You do have to apply yourself. There's nothing wasted in that effort and that'll yield lots of benefits later on in life. But we also know that these are public schools for all children in New York City, and that all children in New York City deserve the opportunity to go to schools anywhere in this city. And add to that the fact that there's a pandemic. There's a pandemic that's changed the way students learn, where students learn, it's changed the way that parents support their students in the learning process as well. So, I just flatly reject the notion that a student that has lost somebody to the pandemic or a student whose parents don't have the option of working from home or a student who's lost their apartment because their parents have lost their jobs that, that student's working any less rigorously than the student who perhaps hasn't had to have those kinds of challenges during this pandemic. So again, this is about supporting all of our students and giving all of our students an opportunity to truly have the opportunity to go to schools across the city.

Mayor: Thank you. Go ahead, Leslie.

Question: Thanks. And I just to follow up, I think that some parents would say one of the reasons they're so focused on getting into specific middle and high schools is because some of the options are very unappealing and low performing. And I know you've just talked about examining learning loss and doing more teacher training and more professional development, but after the Renewal program was disappointing, I think a lot of parents feel there hasn't been enough progress for the lowest performing schools. So, what's the plan for those now, please?

Mayor: Look, Leslie, I am the first to say, I think we did get some important work done with the Renewal program, but not enough. But I would say let's look at the big picture because this speaks to really what parents are looking for. They want the highest quality school for their kid.

They want a school community that can believe in. What's been happening over seven years, graduation rates going up consistently, standardized test scores going up consistently, more and more schools clearly reaching higher quality levels, individual schools that are evolving rapidly. There's no question in my mind, the school system keeps moving forward. We will overcome what we've had to deal with COVID, and by the way, it has brought out heroic efforts by educators that are going to inform everything we do going forward.

So, there's this revolution that is happening now with the use of digital education. We talked about that as part of the 2021 Student Achievement Plan. We're going to have new tools to make our schools better and individualized instruction for each child. So, I only see one direction for New York City public schools, that's up. I truly believe that. I think for the individual parent who's looking for comfort just to – I think I would say to them look at all these things that now are available for your child. AP for All is another great example, every high school in New York City. One thing that is unquestionably a measure of quality is Advanced Placement courses, college level courses, every high school has them, or is getting them right now. That is an example of something you can have confidence in. So this work will continue. But I think in fact, one of the things I've learned with Pre-K for All and 3-K for All, when you create a universality, everyone does better. When you say we're creating a service for everyone, regardless of who they are, everyone participates and has a sense of buy-in by ensuring that we're going to have more and more schools reflect the larger community. I think it gets everyone invested in making the schools better and not saying what I've often talked about, here's the good school, here's the bad school, and you know, we're just going to let that reality stand. No, that reality was broken, it cannot stand, and I think we are really showing that we can change it once and for all. Go ahead.

Moderator: Last question for today goes to Jeff Mays from the New York Times.

Question: Hey, good morning, Mr. Mayor. I had a question for you about the DOI report, you know, in the weeks and months after the Floyd protest, you really defended the police officers. You defended your – you know, the supervisors and leaders of the police. You know, you said officers had used restraint and – but you expressed some remorse today. And I'm wondering that now do you regret actually those defenses that you issued of the department and the leadership as a whole?

Mayor: Jeff, it's a fair question. I regret that I didn't figure out how to lead differently. I regret that I didn't figure out how to speak to the city differently and better. I did believe the things I said, I truly believed them. And I do think it's true, parallel reality, the vast majority of protestors were peaceful, the vast majority of officers did their job, did it under very tough circumstances, did show a lot of restraint. What we saw was some problems for sure, and some officers that did the wrong thing, and we saw the discipline that they deserved and got. We saw some strategies that were wrong that we're owning now, but I really believe our police leadership and our police officers were trying to deal with an incredibly difficult complex situation and trying to make sure that no one died and that the situation didn't get worse and worse and worse. And on that level, they succeeded. So, no, I do not regret trying to speak to that. I regret that I couldn't do a better job speaking to the larger situation and that I didn't understand some of the things that we needed

to change right away in that moment, but I see it now, and this report really shows us what we have to do differently going forward and I'm going to take that as a blessing. Go ahead, Jeff.

Question: Thanks. This morning on Hot 97, you talked about how there was not a different Chief of Patrol and a different head of Community Affairs. I want to be clear, are you placing a blame for what happened during the protests on those former leaders because it seems as if you've mentioned there were failures in those two particular positions?

Mayor: I think, look, we all needed to do better. Every single one of us, including the people who held those roles. But that said, my point this morning was not only do you have a situation which is far from typical, where an independent agency does a tough report and everyone on the receiving end says, this is right. This is fair. We need to do better. We accept it. We will adapt these recommendations and bring them to life immediately. That's not every day in the reality of oversight, but on top of it, I said, we have made personnel changes that I think are very pertinent to the road forward. I think Chief Juanita Holmes as Chief of Patrol will approach things differently. I've very powerful conversations with her about what she took from those experiences in May and June and what we need to do differently and I know she's providing that leadership right now. I think her very presence as the highest-ranking Black woman in the history of the NYPD is crucial for people seeing that change is happening and it will have a real intangible effect. I think chief Jeff Maddrey as the head of Community Affairs brings a very different approach, and we saw in the protests that his approach made a big difference in Brooklyn North, and it will now be making a big difference citywide. So, this is about people in the sense of we've got some new people who I think are going to help us move forward, but it's much more about the decisive conclusion that we must change and we will change, and I will hold everyone's feet to the fire. I hold myself responsible and to hold them responsible, you will see the change and anyone not comfortable with the change, then they should not be in leadership. But I think from the conversations I've had, that really is buy-in that we need to make these changes for the good of New York City.

Everybody, as we conclude, just to say this, I think whether you're talking about the conversation about policing or you're talking about the conversation about school admissions, it gets us back to the same place. There was a status quo for a long time in the city. That status quo was in too many ways broken. It cannot continue. We are moving right now to deepen the changes in the city. There's a lot more change ahead. Everyone needs to be a part of it. The fact is we can change in the city. I have seen it over these last years with neighborhood policing, the extraordinary impact that has made. I've seen it with Equity and Excellence, and Pre-K for All, and Advanced Placement courses for all our kids, every high school, I've seen that you can really do these changes and do them in a lasting way. We are called to do more and we're called to address the inequalities that have been made even sharper by the coronavirus, but the good news is we can actually do it. I truly believe it. This is a city has been heroic during the coronavirus crisis, and it will be heroic and making the important changes, the tough changes, but the necessary changes to be a place of more equality and justice. That is our future. Thank you, everybody.

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