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COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

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September 1, 2021
Start: 10:21 a.m.
Recess: 3:30 p.m.

HELD AT: Council Chambers - City Hall

B E F O R E: Mark Treyger,
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

- Alicka Ampry-Samuel
- Inez D. Barron
- Joseph C. Borelli
- Justin L. Brannan
- Selvena N. Brooks-Powers
- Robert E. Cornegy, Jr.
- Eric Dinowitz
- Daniel Dromm
- Oswald Feliz
- James F. Gennaro
- Barry S. Grodenchik
- Ben Kallos
- Brad S. Lander
- Stephen T. Levin
- Mark Levine
- Farah N. Louis
- I. Daneek Miller
- Kevin C. Riley

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

COUNCIL MEMBERS (CONT.):

Ydanis A. Rodriguez

Deborah L. Rose

Rafael Salamanca, Jr.

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A P P E A R A N C E S

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3 Meisha Porter
New York City Schools Chancellor

4
5 LaShawn Robinson
Deputy Chancellor for School Climate & Wellness

6
7 Dr. Linda Chen
Chief Academic Officer

8
9 Kevin Moran
Chief School Operations Officer

10
11 Lauren Siciliano
Chief Administrative Officer

12
13 Larry Pendergast
Teaching and Learning Larry Pendergast

14
15 Christina Foti
Deputy Chief Academic Officer

16
17 Dave Chokshi
Commissioner for the Department of Health and
Mental Hygiene

18
19 Henry Rubio
Executive Vice President of the Council of School
Supervisors and Administrators CSA

20
21 Shawn Jean-Louis
Education Policy Analyst at Gale Brewer's Office

22
23 Cole Aliel (SP?)
Mother of Two Teenagers

24
25 Lori Podvesker
Lead of the policy work at Include NYC

Dr. Debbie
Mother, Physician and Teacher for a Medical
School

Ashley Sawyer
Senior Director of Campaigns at Girls for Gender
Equity

A P P E A R A N C E S (Cont.)

Margaret Quincy
Medical Freedom New York City

David
Speaking on behalf of Constituents

Gregory Brender
Daycare Council of New York

Michael Horwitz
Class Size Matters

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SERGEANT AT ARMS: This is microphone check.

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Today's date is September 1, 2021, on the Committee

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on Education recorded by Steven Sadowsky.

5

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: [GAVEL] Okay, good morning

6

and wel- okay. Good morning and welcome to the

7

Committee - folks, if we could just uh make sure that

8

- okay.

9

Good morning and welcome to the Committee on

10

Educations Oversight Hearing on the Fall 2021 School

11

Reopening Protocols. My name is Mark Treyger and I

12

am the Chair of the Committee on Education. I'd like

13

to thank the Chancellor of the Department of

14

Education Meisha Porter and the Commissioner of the

15

Department of Health and Mental Hygiene Dr. Chokshi

16

. Folks, for being here today to provide

17

testimony and to answer Council Member questions on

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this very important topic. I also just want to make

19

sure that we reinforce some of the City Council's as

20

an institution our masks policies even during stated

21

meetings. Folks are required in the City Council

22

here to wear masks and that applies here today at

23

this hearing as well.

24

I'm going to - can folks hear me now? Okay, I

25

would just ask for folks attention please because

1
2 this is really important for the public, for
3 families, for parents, for educators, students to get
4 critical information as schools reopen in just under
5 two weeks. So, it's really important that we get
6 this critical information out to the public. And,
7 and right now, folks, please. Yeah, we'll make sure
8 if folks are not complying with - this is really,
9 really important and so timely.

10 I am going to in the interest of time and just
11 make sure that we move things along. I am going to
12 forego my opening statement and just first of all
13 emphasize to the Chancellor, to the Health
14 Commissioner and to their teams that the City
15 Council, we might not always agree and might not see
16 things eye to eye in every item but we don't question
17 your heart, your sincerity, your commitment to making
18 sure that we do everything that we can to keep our
19 students, our staff safe in our school communities.
20 And there is going to be areas of some disagreement
21 here today but I don't question your commitment and
22 your leadership and I do acknowledge the incredible
23 amount of work and time your teams have been putting
24 in to make sure that we keep our school communities
25 safe during these very trying circumstances.

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And the questions that we have today, that I have today, certainly this Committee has today, the overarching questions whether the plan that we have before us, is this the best that we can do? Is this a living document? Are we effectively balancing the health and safety of kids and staff while also meeting the instructional needs of kids who need an incredible amount of support, especially during this time and after what they've went through during this past year. And are we effectively communicating with school communities? Because over and over again, in my conversations with school communities, there's been a major communication gap. And these are some of the big items that we will address.

To date, I believe that the plan that we have before us needs to go much farther. We need to go much farther to provide more flexibility and support to our kids in school communities. I am in support of a remote option for families. I am in support of providing additional options and quite frankly, in my research with NYSUT, the New York City Education Department. They too have actually encouraged school districts, not required but encouraged school districts to explore remote learning opportunities

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2 where it does meet the best educational needs of
3 kids.

4 So, this is not just unique here, this is
5 actually guidance that comes from New York State and
6 other localities across the country are considering
7 some more options. So, I'm going to pause here
8 because I want to turn to my colleague who has done
9 an incredible job in his leadership on public health
10 issues in New York City during this pandemic has been
11 exemplary and I thank him.

12 Please, I'll turn it over now to the Chair of our
13 Health Committee, my colleague Council Member Mark
14 Levine.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: Chair Treyger, thank you.
16 Thank you for your outstanding leadership of this
17 Committee over the last almost four years and in
18 particular for everything you've done to fight for
19 schools during this pandemic. I'm really grateful
20 for your leadership and your partnership and it is
21 great to see the administration here. Chancellor
22 Porter, wonderful to see you and Commissioner Dr.
23 Chokshi, also really wonderful to see you and all of
24 your teams here today.

1
2 Eighteen months into this pandemic. This is
3 still a fast moving crisis. So, where is our city on
4 COVID as of today? Where are we in our battle
5 against Delta? Well, we're averaging over 1,800
6 newly reported COVID cases every day and there are
7 over 860 patients hospitalized with COVID as of today
8 in our city.

9 Now, after relentlessly increasing over much of
10 the summer, these numbers while still extremely high,
11 have thankfully at least stabilized in the last two
12 weeks or so. But make no mistake, we are almost
13 certainly going to face a difficult fall ahead in our
14 battle against Delta. And therefore, in the face of
15 this threat, we must do everything in our power to
16 protect our schools. To protect children, families,
17 staff, communities.

18 There are five key pillars to COVID safety in our
19 schools: Vaccination, ventilation, masking, spacing,
20 testing. We can't afford to underperform in any of
21 these but just twelve days out from the start of the
22 school year, parents and staff still have unanswered
23 questions on many fronts. Will DOE offer vaccination
24 at every middle and high school? What is DOE doing
25 to overcome vaccine hesitancy among middle and high

1
2 school students and parents? Will DOE be supplying
3 high quality masks like KF94 to students and staff?
4 What objective standards is DOE using to codify, to
5 certify that ventilation and air purification are
6 adequate in classrooms and all spaces in schools?

7 Will this be monitored in any way throughout the
8 school year? How will this information be shared
9 with parents? How will DOE handle spacing in over
10 crowded classrooms? What is a class has more than 30
11 students? Why is DOE planning to test so few
12 students? Just ten percent every two weeks, an
13 amount far below what many experts are recommending
14 and what other school systems are already achieving.
15 Why has DOE not purchased huge quantities of rapid
16 self-tests to distribute to families for use at home?
17 Which among other things could allow for quick
18 returns from quarantine.

19 The purpose of this hearing is to get answers to
20 these and many, many other questions and I am
21 extremely excited for this important dialogue and
22 thank you again Chair Treyger. Back to you.

23 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you very much Chair
24 Levine for your leadership. I mean it. You have
25 been really; you and your staff much appreciated.

1
2 Thank you very much and we also have been joined by
3 someone who has really also from the beginning from
4 the onset of this pandemic has stood shoulder to
5 shoulder with school communities. Unapologetically
6 speaking up for the safety and well-being of our kids
7 and staff. Much appreciated. Please welcome for
8 opening remarks, Public Advocate Jumaane Williams.

9 PUBLIC ADVOCATE JUMAANE WILLIAMS: Testing. Is
10 it on? Yeah, uh, thank you Chair Treyger for that
11 introduction and I just want to thank both you Chair
12 Treyger and Chair Levine for the leadership
13 throughout the past year. There have been many
14 people who have tested the political wins before they
15 spoke out but we need the people who have strong
16 voices. And you two are very strong voices
17 throughout this whole pandemic and continue to be, so
18 thank you so much.

19 Thank you Commissioner Chokshi and of course
20 Chancellor Porter for being here. I just wanted to
21 echo some of the things that the Commissioner said.
22 I'm sorry, that the Chair said about our belief and
23 understanding of your dedication and the work that
24 you're trying to do.
25

1
2 So, I want to make sure I'm clear that most of my
3 frustration and I can tell you this, is at the Mayor.
4 Because there are now two different Chancellor's and
5 as Yogi Bear said, déjà vu all over again in my
6 opinion. I feel like we haven't learned the lessons
7 that we should have learned last year and we're
8 starting to do it again. And so, I'm very frustrated
9 about that and I want to make sure I made clear where
10 my frustrations are.

11 As mentioned, my name is Jumaane Williams. I'm
12 the Public Advocate of the City of New York and I
13 would like to thank Chair Treyger and members of the
14 Committee on Education for holding this hearing
15 today. On September 30th, New York City is set to
16 open all of its 1,800 public schools for full-time
17 in-person instruction five days a week.

18 There will be four more seats filled than last
19 year. When only about 350,000 opted in to in-person
20 learning at some point during hybrid schooling,
21 although the administration assured us that there was
22 overwhelming support for this. While educators and
23 school staff are required to be vaccinated against
24 COVID-19, the students ages 12 and older are eligible
25 for the Pfizer BioNTech vaccine. All students

1
2 younger than twelve are unable to be vaccinated.

3 Further, the highly contagious Delta variant poses a
4 new challenge to the vaccinated and the unvaccinated
5 alike.

6 It is imperative that the Department of Education
7 have a clear transparent plan for protecting
8 students, educating school staff and their family
9 before the school year begins. The DOE should also
10 provide a remote learning option for students,
11 educators who do not feel comfortable attending
12 learning in person until students of all ages can be
13 vaccinated against COVID-19 and the Delta variant is
14 under control. Student and educators are at risk in
15 school buildings. At least at the beginning of the
16 school year, this option should be there. It's
17 easier to pull the option back than it is to
18 introduce the option when it's needed.

19 As we do know, there already is some remote
20 learning available for certain students, which causes
21 even more confusion. Despite repeated requests from
22 students and their families there have been no formal
23 remote option for the school year. Because of all
24 students regardless of their ability to get
25 vaccinated are required to attend in-person learning.

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2 It is extremely important that schools are
3 transparent about their safety plans and that the DOE
4 is monitoring these plans to ensure that all possible
5 safety cautions are taken. However, there is no
6 policy in place to ensure that this happens.

7 Approximately 1,500 classrooms are still undergoing
8 ventilation repairs with no publicly set deadline for
9 completion.

10 Thousands of classrooms have been cleared by the
11 DOE as having adequate ventilation for safe in-person
12 instruction even though they do not meet the COVID-19
13 standards set by federal experts or recommended by
14 building industry experts. And at least 4,000 of
15 these classrooms rely exclusively on open windows for
16 ventilation. Ventilation is a key mitigation major
17 for preventing the spread of COVID-19 and is
18 unacceptable with the amount time the DOE has to
19 prepare for thousands of classrooms to be relying on
20 open windows for clean air, especially as we go into
21 cold weather.

22 Many schools in New York City face a safety
23 challenge. The DOE has long been aware of
24 overcrowding. At least ten percent of classrooms are
25 unable to adhere to even three feet of social

1
2 distancing. A standard recommended by the CDC in
3 schools. Although it is likely that four more spaces
4 are actually required to remain safe from the Delta
5 variant. Mask mandates in school will undoubtedly
6 help control the spread of COVID-19 but there are
7 circumstances in which students and educators will
8 have to remove their mask for which there is no clear
9 protocol particularly at lunch.

10 There are also some students with disabilities
11 such as autism or unable to continuously wear a mask.
12 With the Delta variant making removing masks even for
13 a few moments a safety risk, the DOE must provide
14 guidance to keep students and educators safe in
15 crowded settings.

16 The city is shrinking its school virus testing
17 program with ten percent of unvaccinated students
18 expected to be tested every other week this year.
19 With the size of New York City student population,
20 the plan may invite scrutiny. Los Angeles, the
21 countries second largest school district is aiming to
22 at least, to test every student and staff member each
23 week. By the time when the extremely contagious
24 Delta variant is the predominant strain in the city,
25 testing more students more often will protect our

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2 student education and their families. Additionally,
3 when someone in the classroom tests positive for
4 COVID-19, only unvaccinated close contacts will have
5 to quarantine for ten days.

6 In elementary school, when one student tests
7 positive, the entire class will temporarily switch to
8 remote learning. However, the DOE had not provided
9 guidance for how many positive cases would trigger a
10 school by closing, which is important for schools to
11 know prior to the start of the school year.

12 When students have to quarantine, they will need
13 to utilize remote learning while they are at home.
14 Remote learning was extremely challenging for
15 students and their families over the past two years.
16 Particularly for students with disabilities and
17 English Language Learners. We do not know if remote
18 learning has been improved in preparation for its
19 inevitable use. Remote learning will have a greater
20 impact on those who are unvaccinated, who are
21 disproportionately Black and Brown students. Once
22 again, with no updates on how the DOE is working to
23 make remote learning better, these students will be
24 the ones to receive the least quality education.

1
2 We must have a remote learning option for at the
3 start of the school year. That the stakes are too
4 high and our children's lives depend on it now more
5 than ever. All students deserve an environment where
6 they can learn with as little risk to their health
7 and safety as possible. Of course it is
8 unfortunately impossible to fully guarantee that no
9 student or educator will get sick at their school.
10 There is so much more the DOE can be doing to
11 minimize the risk of COVID-19 infection. I hope that
12 we can together protect our school community and make
13 the school year a success. Our students and our
14 educators have a right to feel safe and to actually
15 be safe. And I think in certain regards, both of
16 those things are challenging right now and it doesn't
17 make sense.

18 Again, it feels like last year, the Mayor wanted
19 to be able to say he was the first person to open up
20 a school system. Maybe he's trying to chase another
21 headline right now when it comes to that but I'm very
22 concerned that we learned lessons. We shouldn't have
23 to learn them again. This rush to open these things
24 up without a remote option. Without being able to
25 answer all these questions, make no sense. We should

1
2 minimize the risk. This didn't work out well for us
3 last year. Maybe it will this year but why do we
4 need to take that risk and put people who are in the
5 building who are all very scared and concerned. To
6 me that's a recipe for not being able to learn and
7 the people who suffer the most are the students who
8 always suffer the most.

9 So, I'm pleading with you and by extension to the
10 Mayor to reconsider especially having a formal remote
11 option at least for the beginning of the year. I
12 understand most; a lot of people are never going to
13 want to come back. I understand, they are always
14 going to want that but we have to ease into this. We
15 shouldn't try to swing it open like we did last year.
16 Because it didn't work and my hope is that there is a
17 better relation between the Governor and the Mayor.
18 They don't seem to be on the same page yet on
19 everything. Hopefully it will at least be better
20 than the last relationship.

21 Thank you again. Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you Public Advocate.

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Chair Treyger. My
24 name is Malcolm Butehorn, Counsel to the Education
25

1
2 Committee of the New York City Council. Council
3 Members present, please note for the purpose of this
4 hearing, we will not be allowing a second round of
5 questioning but we will not be putting a clock on
6 your questions. We just ask that you please be
7 cognizant of the time and your fellow colleagues.

8 For public panelists, when your name is called,
9 please proceed to the witness table. We will do in
10 panels, in three total. To be fair and equitable to
11 all those wishing to testify, all public testimony
12 will be limited to three minutes. The time clock is
13 on the wall for your reference and when the chime
14 announces that three minutes is up, we ask that you
15 please wrap up your final thoughts.

16 I will now call on the following members of the
17 Administration to testify. On the Department of
18 Education, we have Chancellor Porter, Senior Deputy
19 Chancellor, Deputy Chancellor LaShawn Robinson, Dr.
20 Linda Chen Chief Academic Officer, Chief School
21 Operations Officer Kevin Moran, Chief Administrative
22 Officer Lauren Siciliano, Deputy Chief Academic
23 Officer for Teaching and Learning Larry Pendergast.

24 And from the Department of Health and Mental
25 Hygiene, Commissioner Chokshi. So, if you call could

1
2 please raise your right hand and due to space, I know
3 you are going to have to pass the mic around, so
4 everyone just bear with us. Do you affirm to tell
5 the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth
6 before this Committee and to respond honestly to
7 Council Member questions?

8 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Wait Malcolm, folks,
9 please, this is really important. So, I, I ask, I
10 respectfully ask that we have some you know quiet and
11 decorum here during this very important hearing.
12 This is critical information that we all need but
13 folks watching the hearing as well, families, parents
14 need. So, I kindly ask please, that when the
15 Administration now will be speaking, that we listen
16 very carefully in respect here the people's house
17 here in the City Council Chamber. Thank you very
18 much.

19 [SOMEONE SPEAKING IN THE BACKGROUND 19:21-19:37]

20 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Respectfully, respectfully,
21 respectfully -

22 [SOMEONE SPEAKING IN THE BACKGROUND 19:40-19:45]

23 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Respectfully, I - this is a
24 hearing. This is a hearing. Folks, folks need to
25 get critical information out.

1
2 [SOMEONE SPEAKING IN THE BACKGROUND 19:56]

3 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: I am a former teacher.

4 [MEMBER OF AUDIENCE]: And I just lost my job
5 because of you.

6 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: This is, this is about
7 making sure that we respect the people's house and
8 get information out to school communities that
9 desperately need it. So, please, we ask if you
10 cannot abide - if you cannot abide - how, how are
11 they getting information when you are speaking over
12 people and we can't have them testify?

13 [SOMEONE SPEAKING IN THE BACKGROUND 20:29-20:34]

14 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Folks, if these
15 disruptions, if these disruptions continue we will
16 ask the Sergeant at Arms to clear out the room.

17 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We want people to keep their
18 masks on and [INAUDIBLE 20:47].

19 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Folks, if there's another
20 outburst, where there is a disruption to this
21 hearing, to get information out to folks, I will ask
22 the Sergeant at Arms to please clear out the room
23 there.

24 This is critically important and Malcolm, please
25 continue to swear them in.

1
2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: I'll read the oath one more
3 time. Do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole
4 truth and nothing but the truth before this Committee
5 and to respond honestly to Council Member questions.
6 Chancellor Porter?

7 MEISHA PORTER: I do.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Senior Deputy Chancellor
9 Rosales?

10 MARISOL ROSALES: I do.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: DC Robinson?

12 LASHAWN ROBINSON: I do.

13 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Dr. Chen?

14 DR. LINDA CHEN: I do.

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Kevin Moran?

16 KEVIN MORAN: I do.

17 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Lauren Siciliano?

18 LAUREN SICILIANO: I do.

19 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Larry Pendergast?

20 LARRY PENDERGAST: I do.

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: And Commissioner Chokshi?

22 DAVE CHOKSHI: Yes, I do.

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Uh and Chancellor, whenever
24 you are ready to begin. Thank you.

25 MEISHA PORTER: Good morning Chair Treyger.

1
2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Chancellor, can you just
3 press the button on the mic there, sorry.

4 MEISHA PORTER: Oh, sorry. Thank you. Thank
5 you.

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: There we go.

7 MEISHA PORTER: Okay, great. Good morning, Chair
8 Treyger, and all the members of the Education
9 Committee here today. I am Meisha Porter, and I have
10 the privilege of serving as New York City Schools
11 Chancellor. Thank you for the opportunity to testify
12 today on the Department of Education's school
13 reopening plans and protocols. I am joined here
14 today by Department of Health and Mental Hygiene
15 Commissioner Dave Chokshi as well as my colleagues
16 from the DOE: Senior Deputy Chancellor Marisol
17 Rosales, Deputy Chancellor LaShawn Robinson, Chief
18 Academic Officer Dr. Linda Chen, Chief Administrative
19 Officer Lauren Siciliano, Chief School Operations
20 Officer Kevin Moran, and Deputy Chief Academic
21 Officers Larry Pendergast, Christina Foti, and Mirza
22 Sanchez-Medina.

23 From the moment I took on this role as
24 Chancellor, I have made clear that my priority has
25 been a safe reopening for this fall. As an educator

1
2 and a New York City public school parent, there is no
3 more important day than Monday, September 13th. We
4 know that our students need to be in school. For
5 many students, the school community is the steadiest,
6 most reliable aspect of their lives, with people and
7 resources they can count on. The evidence is clear,
8 for the benefit of learning and development, our
9 babies need to be back in the classroom. I want to
10 take a moment to reflect on what bringing all of our
11 students back means. It means the return of math
12 lessons and comfort dogs, of sports and reading, of
13 school plays and friends. Simply, it is the return of
14 New Yor City public schools.

15 Last year we were the first major school district
16 to open our doors for in-person learning and created
17 the gold standard approach to health and safety
18 during this pandemic that served as a national model.
19 The multi-layered measures implemented by the DOE
20 made schools some of the safest places to be during
21 the COVID-19 pandemic, and we ended last year with a
22 0.03 percent seven day average positivity rate.

23 This year, by continuing to our work – sorry.
24 But this year, by continuing to work together and
25 following the data, I am confident that we will have

1
2 an amazing year of safe and healthy learning for all.
3 We know from our experiences last school year and
4 over the summer with Summer Rising what works to keep
5 our children, families, and staff safe, and that is
6 exactly what we will continue to do. Thanks to the
7 stimulus funding, state support, and of course the
8 incredible advocacy of this City Council, we have
9 made significant new investments in our system. We
10 are tackling head-on the impacts of the pandemic has
11 had on our children through the Academic Recovery
12 Plan and new social-emotional support systems. We
13 are giving our schools the resources they need to
14 meet students where they are in order to provide a
15 real recovery across our schools. That will make our
16 system more equitable and laser focused on the needs
17 of our students.

18 Summer Rising, our bridge to school this year,
19 was the beginning of that process. I witnessed
20 firsthand at sites across the city what it meant for
21 parents, students and educators to have an
22 academically enriching and fun experience over the
23 summer. I heard from students who said they wanted
24 to be in their Summer Rising schools because they
25 needed more academic help, and also enjoyed getting

1
2 reconnected with their peers and teachers. It's
3 powerful to recognize what Summer Rising has meant to
4 our comeback. I've said Summer Rising is our bridge
5 back to in-person learning and that's what it has
6 been. Our students have gotten back into gear in
7 their learning process and are now going to be able
8 to hit the ground running in September.

9 At the same time, it is so important to be
10 mindful that we are also reopening to a different
11 reality than last year and we must continue to
12 acknowledge the very real threat of this pandemic.
13 Over the past several months, we have met with school
14 leaders across the city to understand what worked
15 last year and the adjustments we needed to make based
16 on what we learned from all our experiences. We also
17 met with public health officials, including
18 Commissioner Chokshi, to understand the science of
19 safely bringing all of our children back to schools.

20 And, crucially, we have continuously met with
21 families to understand their concerns and hopes for
22 their babies for the upcoming school year. We know
23 how eager families are for a safe return, and how
24 difficult it can seem to get a handle on changes that
25 are happening. So, we've hosted open houses for

1
2 parents who want to come in and see their school
3 buildings before opening day, see the schools, talk
4 to principals, meet with teachers. We're letting
5 them know that our schools are ready. We're also
6 providing the information and the reassurance they
7 need to send their children back to classrooms with
8 confidence. That includes our recently released
9 Homecoming Handbook, which summarizes all the
10 information families need on our health and safety
11 protocols for the year while pointing them to
12 resources for more details if they have further
13 questions. And we will continue to conduct family
14 forums and town halls to hear from families and
15 ensure that they are engaged and empowered with the
16 tools and information they need.

17 I know that the challenges COVID poses are
18 difficult and stressful for everyone. This continues
19 to be very hard. But I believe our multi-layered,
20 comprehensive plan for health and safety will be
21 successful because it is based on science, data, and
22 our own real-world experience. So let me provide you
23 with an overview of its main features.

24 This year we have a powerful source of protection
25 that we did not have last year, vaccinations. These

1
2 incredibly safe and effective vaccines will do so
3 much to keep our school communities safe. To that
4 end, everyone who works in our schools will receive
5 their first dose by September 27th. Every parent can
6 be assured that the educators and school staff who
7 work with their children every day will be
8 vaccinated, providing yet another significant layer
9 of protection and safety. In addition, every student
10 over the age of 12 is now eligible to receive the
11 Pfizer vaccine. And over 60 percent of young people
12 ages 12-17 have already taken advantage of this.

13 As the Mayor will announce this morning, we are
14 going to bring vaccinations directly to our students.
15 During the first week of school, every single school
16 that has students ages 12 and up, will have a
17 vaccination site in the building. That is a total of
18 approximately 700 buildings that will safely
19 administer the vaccine to our eligible students
20 during the school day. And in the lead up to
21 September 13th, we will have vaccinations available
22 at our borough and Central offices, so that employees
23 can get their shots well before the September 27th
24 deadline.

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2 Prevention begins at the school door with
3 required health screenings for anyone entering a DOE
4 building. We are asking families to submit these
5 screenings and perform temperature checks at home on
6 a daily basis before their child leaves for school.
7 Any families who need a thermometer will be able to
8 get one from their school. And importantly, if a
9 student or staff member is feeling ill, we are asking
10 them to stay at home. As we announced in May, masks
11 will be required for all people inside and outside of
12 DOE buildings, regardless of vaccination status.
13 Wearing a mask is a simple, effective way to keep
14 everyone safe. Students who are not medically able
15 to tolerate a mask will be provided with
16 accommodations.

17 Following CDC and State guidance, schools will
18 provide three feet of physical distancing, where
19 possible. Physical distancing is one part of a
20 multi-layered strategy, and additional safety is
21 provided by vaccinations, mask usage, improved
22 ventilation, a focus on hygiene, testing, and
23 surveillance by the Situation Room. It's important
24 to remember that both the CDC and the State have
25 emphasized that physical distancing should not

1
2 prevent students from fully returning to school this
3 year and reaping the benefits of being back in
4 classrooms with their loving teachers, peers and
5 untold support they receive from being in-person.

6 We know the ability to bring fresh air into a
7 room, circulate, and exhaust it is a critical part of
8 preventing the spread of COVID-19. In order to
9 provide full transparency to our families, the
10 ventilation status of every room in a DOE building
11 can be found on our website. Every DOE room in use
12 by students and staff for extended periods of time
13 will have fully operational ventilation through
14 either natural, mechanical, or a combination of
15 means. Additionally, as an added precaution, every
16 room has two air purifiers that meet and exceed HEPA
17 standards and cafeterias in over-utilized schools
18 will be provided with large units for added
19 protection and window-based exhaust fans to provide
20 additional air circulation.

21 We were able to see this today at the Murry
22 Bergtraum campus, where we walked the halls with
23 Council Member Levine and members of the media to
24 showcase just one example of all of the work put into
25 our schools to make them safe for our students.

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2 Similarly, we are continuing our enhanced cleaning
3 techniques put in place last year and will continue
4 to make sure every building always has a full 30 days
5 of Personal Protective Equipment available, including
6 masks for anyone who forgets or loses theirs.

7 Since the early days of the pandemic, our
8 custodial engineers and facilities staff have been
9 hard at work making sure our buildings are safe.
10 With a year and a half of experience under their
11 belts, they know the job and will continue that hard
12 work this year. I am so personally grateful for
13 their continued dedication and commitment to
14 excellence in all of their work to keep our babies
15 safe. Random surveillance testing provides public
16 health experts with an important stream of
17 information to understand the prevalence of COVID-19
18 in our school communities. This year, every school
19 will randomly test biweekly unvaccinated students,
20 who have submitted consent for testing, at a
21 threshold of ten percent of unvaccinated students per
22 school population. The information from those tests
23 and all other reports of positive COVID-19 tests will
24 be communicated to the Situation Room, which will
25 continue to perform contact tracing and provide

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2 health and safety guidance to school leaders in a
3 timely and efficient manner. We are asking all of
4 our families to be sure to submit consent forms by
5 the first week of school to provide permission
6 required for those essential tests.

7 Our health and safety strategies are built on
8 providing multiple layers of scientifically proven
9 prevention strategies. Last year proved to us that
10 our public schools were some of the safest places to
11 be during the pandemic, and with the vaccination
12 rates continuing to rise every year, we expect far
13 fewer disruptions to learning. For this upcoming
14 school year, we are continuing the successful
15 quarantine and closing policies that kept our schools
16 safe during Summer Rising. Specifically, with
17 confirmation of a positive case, we will move to
18 close a classroom and quarantine close contacts for
19 ten days. Fully vaccinated individuals will not have
20 to quarantine, as long as they are asymptomatic.
21 However, those vaccinated students will be encouraged
22 to take a COVID-19 test three to five days after
23 potential exposure.

24 Unvaccinated middle and high school students may
25 test back into their classrooms out of quarantine

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2 after the seventh day if they provide proof of a
3 negative COVID-19 test, which can be uploaded to the
4 DOE vaccination portal. A school will close if there
5 is evidence of widespread, in-school transmission as
6 determined by the Situation Room and the Department
7 of Health. This approach was incredibly successful
8 throughout the summer. We want our children in
9 school every day, and these measures have proven to
10 keep them safe. These policies, combined with
11 vaccination rates that are climbing every day, will
12 lead to far fewer disruptive closures than we had
13 during the last school year.

14 While quarantining, learning will not stop. Our
15 educators have over a year of experience teaching
16 both online and in-person during a pandemic. For
17 elementary school students quarantining, live online
18 instruction will be provided. Middle and high school
19 students in partial classroom closures will receive
20 asynchronous remote instruction, as well as office
21 hours with their teachers. Providing a high-quality
22 learning environment for medically fragile students
23 has always been a focus of the DOE, as I know
24 firsthand from my 20 years of experience here.

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Due to the pandemic, our pre-existing home instruction program is being expanded to include more students who need medically necessary home instruction. It can include individual in-person instruction by a certified teacher, or individual and small group instruction by certified teachers through digital platforms. I know these families are concerned about the safety of their children this year, and we are intent on making this process easy and accessible.

Finally, we know that there is more to health and a successful return to school than just physical safety. It has been said over and over again, but it bears repeating. Our children have faced immense trauma throughout this pandemic. To welcome our students back and with the Council's help, we are building on years of investments in social-emotional and mental health supports. That includes implementing screeners to help teachers better identify students in crisis, training tens of thousands of our teachers and staff in trauma-informed practices and hiring 500 additional social workers to support students in communities hardest hit by COVID-19. Our school communities will be well

1
2 equipped to provide the support our students need in
3 returning to school.

4 Our entire school system has been hard at work
5 preparing our schools for a safe opening and a joyous
6 homecoming for every student. I want to personally
7 thank every educator, administrator,
8 paraprofessional, custodian, food service employee,
9 social worker, school safety agents, guidance
10 counselor, and every member of our district and
11 central staff who are working around the clock to
12 make this year a success. And I want to thank this
13 Council for its continued leadership and advocacy on
14 behalf of our schools. Together, we are seizing this
15 moment. This is an opportunity to shift gears from
16 adversity to recovery and from hardship to healing.

17 In less than two weeks we are going to have all
18 of our children back in classrooms where they belong,
19 joyful in learning and reconnecting. I could not be
20 more excited to help usher in our most important
21 first day of school ever. Thank you for your time,
22 and I will be happy to answer any questions you may
23 have.

24 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Just for the record Chair, we
25 just want to acknowledge that we've been joined by

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2 Council Members Levine and this is the order the
3 questions that will be asked by Council Members:
4 Levine, Brannan, Grodenchik, Dinowitz, Ampry-Samuel,
5 Louis, the Public Advocate, Borelli, Lander, Riley,
6 Gennaro, Miller, Brooks-Powers, Feliz and Kallos.
7 And Chair, I will turn it over to you.

8 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Okay, thank you very much
9 Chancellor. Some of the questions that I have here
10 at the start, I'll turn also to Dr. Chokshi, the
11 Health Commissioner. Thank you as well for being
12 here. Just a couple of items, I'd just like to kind
13 of make sure that we have on the record.
14 Commissioner, the Delta variant now accounts for the
15 overwhelming number of COVID cases in New York City.
16 Is that correct?

17 DAVE CHOKSHI: That's correct.

18 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Do you have an up-to-date
19 number, a percentage? Is it pretty much all cases if
20 you have a -

21 DAVE CHOKSHI: It's virtually all cases. It's
22 over 98 percent currently.

23 [CROWD MAKING NOISE]

24 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Folks, please. There is
25 ways to, if you agree with something, there is other

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2 ways to communicate but we really need to make sure
3 that we have an orderly hearing. Thank you.

4 Is it accurate to say Commissioner, that the
5 Delta variant is more contagious to children and from
6 children than the older variants?

7 DAVE CHOKSHI: We do know that the Delta variant
8 is more contagious. That means it's more
9 transmissible. That appears to hold true across all
10 ages.

11 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: CDC currently classifies
12 New York City as a high transmission area, is that
13 correct?

14 DAVE CHOKSHI: Yes.

15 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: And with high community
16 transmission, the CDC recommends that school
17 districts take additional steps to keep students and
18 staff safe, is that correct?

19 DAVE CHOKSHI: It is correct Council Member. I
20 will emphasize that the approach that the CDC
21 recommends is the layered mitigation approach that
22 the Chancellor has described.

23 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Right and testing is in
24 schools, as we've heard is a key part of the
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2 multilayered safety approach, particularly in high
3 transmission areas, is that correct?

4 DAVE CHOKSHI: Yes, it's one of the important
5 layers, correct.

6 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Consent forms to conduct
7 testing for students were required to be signed and
8 returned by parents, guardians in order for their
9 children to remain in school buildings during the
10 last school year. Is that correct?

11 DAVE CHOKSHI: I believe that's correct. I will
12 defer to my education colleagues on that.

13 MEISHA PORTER: That is correct.

14 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: The return of consent forms
15 is no longer required for this coming school year.
16 Is that correct?

17 MEISHA PORTER: It is correct.

18 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: And New York City schools
19 are not permitted to test children that did not
20 return the consent forms. Is that correct?

21 MEISHA PORTER: That is correct.

22 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: So, the question I have for
23 Dr. Chokshi, please explain to school communities,
24 certainly the one's that have reached out to me why
25 New York City is no longer requiring the return of

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2 consent forms to remain in school buildings,
3 particularly when you have testified, we're dealing
4 with a more contagious variant than last year and
5 there are still no authorized vaccine for kids under
6 12?

7 DAVE CHOKSHI: Thank you for the question Chair.
8 I'll start by putting testing in the context that
9 we've described, which is that it is one of the
10 important layers of mitigation along with
11 vaccination, distancing, ventilation and the other
12 precautions and hygiene measures, such as hand
13 washing. And very importantly, ensuring that
14 children who are exhibiting symptoms actually stay
15 home and don't come to school in the first place.

16 With the respect to the survey testing that you
17 described, the purpose of survey testing from the
18 public health perspective is to get a sense of what
19 the prevalence of a disease is in the school
20 population. And the approach that we are
21 undertaking, we believe will give us that prevalence
22 information that's very important from the public
23 health standpoint.

24 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: So, I am hearing just
25 Commissioner and Chancellor, I'm just again, we keep

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2 it real here. I am hearing the opposite. I'm
3 hearing opposite from school leaders. What I am
4 hearing from is that there is worry that schools will
5 end up testing the same small group of kids each
6 month. The same small group of kids each month who
7 did return their consent forms, which fall short of
8 the comprehensive gold standard of protection
9 families have been promised.

10 What are your thoughts and your assessment of the
11 concerns that I'm hearing repeatedly from school
12 leaders about that?

13 DAVE CHOKSHI: I'll be happy to start and of
14 course the Chancellor should add in. I do understand
15 the concern and it was a concern that we heard last
16 year as well with respect to the testing approach and
17 ensuring that we were getting an adequate sample with
18 respect to the survey testing.

19 We demonstrated last year that we were able to
20 estimate the prevalence in schools based on that
21 adequate sample and in fact, we showed in a peer
22 reviewed scientific research that based on that, the
23 prevalence within the school community was
24 significantly lower than the community prevalence
25 over the entire school year.

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2 We do believe that again, you know based on the
3 changing circumstances this year, including the fact
4 that there will be more children in school, that we
5 will be able to accurately estimate the prevalence
6 based on the approach that we have undertaken. If
7 the circumstances warrant any adjustments to that
8 based on the science and the data, of course that
9 will be considered and adjusted as necessary.

10 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: So, what I'll say and then
11 I have a couple follow-ups to that is you know, first
12 of all, I had toured the situation room last school
13 year and I want to give a big thank you to
14 Commissioner Melanie Le Rocca, who really has done an
15 extraordinary job and the entire team at the
16 situation room.

17 What I will tell you to both Commissioner and
18 Chancellor, the situation room was really busy. They
19 were really busy and I will remind the public that
20 the majority of students were opted for remote during
21 the last school year. So, I believe at its height,
22 somewhere around 350,000 kids might have opted for
23 in-person at some point of the last school year. But
24 the majority of kids were home or were learning
25 remotely and the situation room was extremely busy.

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2 Would you agree with that assessment, the situation
3 room. Not only are they dedicated, hard working
4 folks but it was a very busy place. Would you agree
5 with that assessment?

6 DAVE CHOKSHI: Well, first Chair Treyger, thank
7 you so much for highlighting the work of the
8 situation room. I wholeheartedly agree. It was an
9 extraordinary undertaking by the City of New York
10 across multiple agencies led by Commissioner La Rocca
11 as you mentioned, but involving close coordination
12 across the Department of Education, the Health
13 Department, the Test and Trace Corp and multiple
14 other city staff.

15 I'm very proud of the work that the situation
16 room did last year. We were one of the very few
17 jurisdictions around the country that was able to
18 bring to bear what the situation room offered. And
19 that's part of the reason that we were one of the few
20 large school districts that were able to return
21 students to in-person learning.

22 Yes, particularly when there were higher levels
23 of community transmission, the situation room was
24 busy. We had ways to adjust staffing to ensure that
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2 staffing was calibrated to the magnitude of the work
3 that was required.

4 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Commissioner, do you have
5 the name of the lab company that will be processing
6 the tests and can you speak to their processing
7 capacity? And just a follow-up here is, what is the
8 expected turn around time to get results? Because
9 last school year, I got reports that in some cases,
10 schools had to wait up to two weeks to get results,
11 which makes the test results moot in my opinion.

12 DAVE CHOKSHI: I don't have the specific names of
13 the companies. Usually we coordinate with multiple
14 testing vendors, both for our school testing as well
15 as for community testing. But I can answer the other
16 parts of your question and we can follow-up on the
17 specific companies.

18 With respect to capacity, New York City has
19 sufficient capacity for testing. Again, both across
20 our school-based testing program, as well as for
21 community testing. In fact, and again, this is due
22 to hard work from colleagues at the Test and Trace
23 Corp and multiple other parts of city government. We
24 have one of the largest testing apparatuses, not just
25 in the country but across the world and that has been

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2 part of what has helped to keep New Yorkers safe over
3 the last year plus of the pandemic.

4 In general, our testing turnaround times have
5 significantly improved compared to you know one year
6 or 18 months ago and in general, most test results
7 come back within 24-48 hours.

8 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: I am just flagging for you
9 that last school year I was contacted repeatedly by
10 schools across the city, not just in my district,
11 that the results came back in some cases over a week.
12 And again, that's at a time when the majority of kids
13 opted for remote. Now, there's an expectation for
14 all kids to come back. I want to make sure that
15 there is capacity and there is timely turn around
16 because I think you would agree Commissioner, that to
17 get results after a week, they almost become moot.
18 Is that correct?

19 DAVE CHOKSHI: Thank you Chair. Those are
20 important points.

21 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: We heard in the testimony
22 and I heard the Mayor say this before about the
23 number of young people who have been vaccinated. I
24 just want to be clear, how many New York City public
25 school students have, who are eligible to get the

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2 vaccine, how many New York public students have
3 received the vaccines up to this point?

4 DAVE CHOKSHI: I can give you the data that I
5 have for New York City as a whole and I will defer to
6 the Chancellor for any additional comments. For New
7 York City as a whole, 62 percent of eligible
8 children, that's between the ages of 12 and 17 have
9 received at least one dose of the vaccine thus far.
10 And almost all of them do come back for the second
11 dose to complete their vaccine series. That's over
12 320,000 children across the city. That rate is
13 significantly higher than almost any other city
14 across the United States and that reflects concerted
15 efforts over the last several weeks to ensure that
16 all eligible children have ready access to the
17 vaccine. That we have striven to build vaccine
18 confidence among families and among adolescents
19 themselves. And as you heard in the Chancellor's
20 testimony, we aim to push that number even higher
21 through the approaches described in making the
22 vaccine readily available before the first day of
23 school and then in the initial weeks of school as
24 well.

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CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: But Commissioner, respectfully, if I am hearing you correctly, the numbers you are giving us, that could include students that go to a private school. And also, we have kids in the school system who are over the age of 17 so are eligible for vaccination. Do we have a number of kids in the public school system who are eligible for vaccination who have received vaccination. Do we have that number here with us today?

MEISHA PORTER: We do not have that number here with us today but we're in the process of collecting that information through the DOE vaccine portal.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: So and Chancellor, we would really appreciate that and quite frankly, when you mention the portal, I've spoken to a number of school principals and other folks. This announcement of the portal only came recently, is that correct?

MEISHA PORTER: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: If a student receives the vaccine, is the student required to report this information to the school or to the school portal?

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2 MEISHA PORTER: They are not required to. The
3 students are not required to, our staff members are
4 required to upload the information.

5 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: And so, and Chancellor, why
6 isn't there any language regarding how families can
7 opt to communicate vaccination status with their
8 schools and the DOE has recently issued homecoming
9 guidebook.

10 MEISHA PORTER: That information is in the
11 guidebook.

12 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: I read it and it talks
13 about how to sign up for a vaccine appointment.

14 MEISHA PORTER: Hmm, hmm.

15 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: It does not say to families
16 you can log on to this portal to indicate vaccination
17 status.

18 MEISHA PORTER: Well, we'll actively review the
19 guidebook and we can update it. It is a live
20 document because we know that we are going to have to
21 continuously provide updated information to families.

22 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: And, and I also reviewed
23 NYSUT's guidance on this area. It says,
24 Administrators who maintain documentation of students
25 and workers COVID-19 vaccinations can use this

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2 information consistent with applicable laws and
3 regulations including those related to privacy to
4 inform prevention strategy, school-based testing,
5 contact tracing efforts and quarantine and isolation
6 practices.

7 Schools that plan to request voluntary submission
8 of documentation status, COVID and vaccination
9 status, should use the same standard protocols that
10 are used to collect and secure other immunization or
11 health status information from students. What I am
12 getting at here is that principals are the ones
13 responsible to implement the school protocols in
14 terms of who has to quarantine, who has to, testing
15 there are in charge of the school building.

16 At this hour, many of them don't know who in
17 their buildings have received vaccination status and
18 many of them that I spoke with, did not know about
19 this online portal. And I also think about families,
20 how is this being communicated with families that
21 they have the option to indicate that on the portal?
22 Can anyone speak to the communication plan with both
23 school leaders, school communities and parents and
24 families about this online portal?

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2 MEISHA PORTER: Yeah and just, you know, thank
3 you for that important question. We know how
4 important it is to make information transparent, open
5 and clear to our amazing principals who have to
6 implement these policies. And so that our families
7 can upload the information.

8 So, I'm going to have Lauren Siciliano talk to
9 you have the vaccine portal and how all of that
10 communication works.

11 LAUREN SICILIANO: Thank you Chancellor and thank
12 you Chair Treyger for the question. Just to echo
13 what the Chancellor said, we absolutely agree that
14 communication is essential here, to make sure that
15 all of our school communities are aware of the
16 portal, both for staff and for students.

17 A few things that I wanted to add in terms of how
18 principals will implement the protocols or how the
19 protocols will be implemented around quarantine and I
20 wanted to make it clear that the situation room is
21 the primary point for the principal. Who will be
22 advising the principal based on the close contacts.
23 Who needs to quarantine verses who does not.

24 While it is of course helpful for principals to
25 have this information, I just want to make sure it's

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2 clear that they are not charged knowing who is
3 vaccinated or not in the school. The situation room
4 will be making that assessment and they have access
5 to a city registry of vaccinations that they can also
6 use to convert who has been vaccinated.

7 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: So, just to be clear
8 because this is important to get out to the public,
9 so the situation room will have access to a citywide
10 registry of who was vaccinated, is that correct?

11 LAUREN SICILIANO: That's correct.

12 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: And principals will be
13 speaking with the situation room and vice versa.

14 LAUREN SICILIANO: That's correct.

15 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: When it comes – if there's
16 a case that has to get followed up on, they will know
17 who from their school is vaccinated or not. Is that
18 right, they have that information?

19 LAUREN SICILIANO: That's correct, they confirm
20 that information.

21 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: And are principals aware of
22 that? Aware of this right now?

23 LAUREN SICILIANO: They, we always are trying to
24 improve our communication, so uhm, I will say
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2 generally though that those were the same protocols
3 for last year, so principals should be expecting –

4 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Well, last year there was
5 no vaccination but.

6 LAUREN SICILIANO: Over the summer.

7 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Yeah, right.

8 LAUREN SICILIANO: In terms of staff, so yes.
9 But that was the protocol since the vaccinations
10 became available and we'll make sure to continue to
11 reemphasize that.

12 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Uhm, during the last school
13 year, if a student in the building did not feel well,
14 they were taken or they were supposed to be taken to
15 an isolation room to be evaluated by a nurse or the
16 schools designated coordinator. Is that still the
17 case this school year?

18 MEISHA PORTER: Yes, that is still the case and
19 we continue to ensure that we have a nurse in every
20 school building to support as needed.

21 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: So, just to be clear
22 Chancellor, schools are expected to have a dedicated
23 space in their buildings for an isolation room?

24 MEISHA PORTER: Yes.
25

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2 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: And is that, are you
3 hearing concerns about space constraints with regards
4 to having an isolation room when everyone is coming
5 back into the building?

6 MEISHA PORTER: We have not heard concerns about
7 having an isolation room with folks coming back into
8 the buildings.

9 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: To quickly follow-up on
10 this. Dr. Chokshi, last year the city shifted the
11 school closure rule from two positive cases in two
12 different classrooms to I believe four cases later in
13 the school year. What is the school closure policy
14 for this upcoming school year regarding confirmed
15 cases and how does the city define for a school
16 community what widespread transmission means?

17 DAVE CHOKSHI: Thank you very much Chair Treyger.
18 I know this is also a question that's on many
19 people's minds, particularly many families minds and
20 I understand why. It's a good example of a place
21 where we have learned from our experience over the
22 past year with respect to refining our safety
23 protocols and striking the right balance between
24 first and foremost keeping the school community safe
25 but also minimizing many disruptions in learning.

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And so, with respect to the widespread transmission threshold that you're asking about, the brief version is that our disease detectives, they embark on investigation when there are multiple cases identified within a school community. Based on that, if there's evidence of multiple sources of infection across multiple spaces or cohorts in the school building and they make a determination that there is a reasonably high likelihood that transmission is occurring within the school as opposed to outside of the school, in the community, then that would meet the criteria for widespread transmission.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Commissioner, how many disease detectives do you have assigned to schools?

DAVE CHOKSHI: We can follow-up on the specific number. But again, this is dynamic based on the case load and the work load that you know, that we'll see.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: So, I just want to again, like, I, it's hard to relive this but at the start of the pandemic, this was sort of what the city's policy was. Where a school, the DOE did not have the power to close their own schools in the beginning. I remember this very, very you know; this was right at the start and the Health Department had to make the

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2 call. And there were major, major communication
3 issues between the Health Department and local
4 schools with regards to - so, how can you just assure
5 us that there is going to be much better
6 coordination, communication, in particular, how much
7 staff will be assigned to-? Because principals have
8 asked me this question repeatedly, because parents
9 will inevitably call teachers and also, I know what
10 happens. When there is a confirmed case and by the
11 way, are principals required to still notify the
12 school community that there is a confirmed case in
13 their building? Can anyone speak to that? Are
14 principals required to share that information?

15 MEISHA PORTER: You want to talk to that Kevin.

16 KEVIN MORAN: Thank you very much for the
17 question. Yes, the situation room now, I hear what
18 your saying. It's much different than it was last
19 September. One thing is, we have additional staff
20 and I thank you for your advocacy. We have nearly
21 100 to the situation room, 84 to be exact. And those
22 individuals are supporting alongside trained
23 individuals and more importantly, experienced
24 individuals. Individuals that work with principals
25 on this intake. In terms of making this very fluid.

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2 When a principal calls in, they get the case, now we
3 can start working down to confirm the case and then
4 coming back with necessary communications. If it's a
5 classroom closure, that letter. If it's multiple
6 classes, that letter. If it is something that goes
7 to the fourth case and has something that is
8 considered widespread, then that ten day notification
9 for closure would also be a letter that goes out.
10 And we did overtime improve the turnaround time from
11 when a principal said, I need to make this
12 notification. I have this case.

13 In the beginning, we took a pain staking effort
14 to make sure it was a confirmed case because some
15 instances it didn't turn out to be true, it was
16 someone who came from you know, with another idea.
17 You know another pediatrician or something and they
18 didn't have a confirmed case yet. So, we took pain
19 staking efforts to make sure that the information we
20 were working with and notifying school communities
21 up, was valid and confirmed by the Department of
22 Health, the experts.

23 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Kevin, my question was, are
24 parents supposed to get notified when there is a
25 confirmed case in a school?

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KEVIN MORAN: That's right.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: They are?

KEVIN MORAN: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Even with one case?

KEVIN MORAN: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Because I'm just sharing you know the reality on the ground. Once there's a confirmed case, there is a lot of concern. Once there is, I went through a school in my district last school year where there were like five, six cases within a week. And there was a lot of concern which spilled onto social media and I have to field the calls. I am sure you field the calls. So, Commissioner Chokshi, the concern is, principals will be asked repeatedly why isn't the building closing if there is five or six confirmed cases popping up within? - Are they referring parents and folks to the Health Department to answer that? How does that work?

DAVE CHOKSHI: That coordination occurs through the situation room. But with respect to the interface for communication with parents and families, that will always be through school leadership.

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2 KEVIN MORAN: And Chair, what I'd like to do is
3 send you the updated protocols offline after the
4 hearing and make sure you have what our principals
5 receive and what our situation room disseminates.
6 So, you can see the flow of information and in each
7 case, what are those necessary steps.

8 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: I just, you know, I know
9 the Chancellor mentioned it in opening and I
10 appreciate it. School leadership, schools
11 communities, they are being asked to be public health
12 administrators. They are doing interior designing
13 right now, moving furniture around. Trying to make
14 this work for kids to the best of their ability. I
15 just want to say, that there is a cost as well here
16 Commissioner. I'm putting my teacher hat on. The
17 more principals and school folks are working on this,
18 that means less time on advancing instructional
19 agenda forward and I just want to make it clear. You
20 know principals you know they do a lot. But the more
21 time they are doing whether it's contact tracing,
22 situation room coordination, communication with
23 families about cases. There is going to be a cost
24 here and I just want to make sure that we get that.

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2 I'm going to wrap up with a final question and turn
3 to my colleagues.

4 DAVE CHOKSHI: Chair Treyger, I just want to make
5 sure to clarify.

6 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Yeah, yeah.

7 DAVE CHOKSHI: Because your point is very well
8 taken and our colleagues in education, teachers and
9 administrators have born herculean burdens and
10 they've really stepped up to the challenges and the
11 demands over the past school year in particular. But
12 with respect to the epidemiological investigations on
13 the contact tracing that's occurring, those are
14 things that are coordinated and that are performed
15 through the situation room. It's the school
16 leadership whom we're looking to communicate because
17 they have the relationships with their school
18 community and with their families.

19 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Right but Commissioner
20 respectfully in high school, it's not easy for the
21 situation room to determine contact tracing. I used
22 to teach high school. Kids move to different classes
23 with different groups of kids during the course of
24 the day. As opposed to elementary school where
25

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2 typically kids are with the same group of kids all
3 day it's easier to contact trace.

4 So, inevitably, someone is going to call the
5 principal and the staff and say can you please tell
6 us everyone's program? Who are they with second
7 period? Who are they with third period. I know this
8 and so, the question is, is that going to fall on the
9 principal and their team to come up with that
10 information to share with the situation room? Is
11 that accurate?

12 DAVE CHOKSHI: There will have to be close
13 coordination of course between school leaders,
14 teachers and the investigators.

15 MEISHA PORTER: And can I just add?

16 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Yes, Chancellor, yes.

17 MEISHA PORTER: So, having sat in all of those
18 seats as a teacher, assistant principal and principal
19 but also as a public school parent, you know what
20 we've heard overwhelmingly, our principals have
21 worked so hard as you noted to get our students back
22 in school because they know it's important and we
23 know it's important. What this central office is
24 working to do is also wrap ourselves around in a very
25 supportive way around our principals, so that they

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2 can do the work that they need to do to get our
3 babies in classes but also to make sure that learning
4 happens. This, we're in a place that we've never
5 been but we also have a thing that we didn't have a
6 year ago which is a vaccination. And so, it
7 positions us in a much greater place to not only
8 welcome our students back. Welcome them back safely
9 and to warm their learning environments where they
10 are wrapped with folks who are deeply dedicated to
11 them. And we're dedicated to the work of our
12 principals because like you said, having sat in that
13 seat, I know who my families want to hear from and
14 that's from me as the principal. And I know that the
15 coordination with our partners at DOHMH around my
16 building falls on me. I recognize that.

17 And so, our job essentially is to make sure we're
18 pouring in all of the supports and resources to help
19 principals do just that.

20 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: And Chancellor, I hear you
21 and everything you said about it makes sense to me
22 and I respect that. It's just, I know having you
23 know been in the building with a very dedicated
24 principal, priority number one was keeping kids safe
25 and supported. This is quite a bit.

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MEISHA PORTER: It is.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: This is quite a bit and to me there is going to be a cost to you know, that's going to be one less observation that - that's going to be one less teacher feedback you know, a debriefing on a lesson. This is going to take a lot of time during the course of a school day. I mean, that's inevitably what happens.

But Dr. Chokshi, the Chancellor again mentioned vaccination being a key thing here. We don't have information here today about the number of public school kids who have received vaccination. This is a question that's come up to me repeatedly by folks. I am not a public health expert. I am an educator by trade. You're the city's top doctor. What is your, as a medical professional and the city's top doctor, what is your view and opinion on a requirement of vaccination for students in the public school system?

DAVE CHOKSHI: Thank you for the opportunity to speak about vaccination. It is the single most intervention that we have in the pandemic right now. You know, in terms of keeping the whole city safe but also, in terms of keeping our schools as safe as possible. With respect to school staff, there is the

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2 vaccine requirement that the Chancellor has described
3 and that goes a long way, not just in terms of
4 protecting the adults in the building but very
5 importantly in protecting the children who are in the
6 building as well.

7 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: And that's the question.

8 DAVE CHOKSHI: I will answer that part of it as
9 well Chair. We saw last year that the majority of
10 transmission, when it occurred in school buildings,
11 which again was at a very low rate, was occurring
12 from adults. And so, that is why it's particularly
13 important for the protection of children to ensure
14 that all adults are vaccinated as well.

15 With respect to your question about children.
16 You know, I'll defer to my Department of Education
17 colleagues on the specific numbers. The 62 percent
18 that I mentioned. That is something that is very
19 important and valuable for the public school
20 community as well. Because we know that kids,
21 adolescents, you know, they spend time, not just in
22 school but also socializing you know with other
23 adolescents who may be going to a different school,
24 who may be going to a private school. And so, that's
25 also very important. With respect to creating the

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2 protective bubble that we need and that vaccination
3 affords.

4 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: And Commissioner what I'll
5 say is that last school year when the mayor told the
6 public that attendance citywide was over 87 plus 90
7 percent, we had asked for school by school district
8 by district breakdown. We actually had to subpoena
9 the city to get that attendance breakdown and it
10 showed in some of the hardest hit communities in New
11 York City. Attendance was very concerning. So, I
12 hear you on the citywide numbers but we need a lot
13 more granular information particularly for the
14 hardest hit communities who continue to go through so
15 much. Last question—

16 MEISHA PORTER: Chair Treyger, can I just add to
17 that and I'm going to ask Lauren Siciliano to talk
18 about this. We're also working through the vaccine
19 match system.

20 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Right.

21 MEISHA PORTER: To A through ATS and DOHMH to
22 match students vaccinated who are currently enrolled
23 in our system.

24 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Okay, thank you. Thank you
25 Lauren for that. Chancellor, remote learning and

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2 then we're turn it - I apologize to my colleagues.
3 Can you say with certainty today that every child in
4 our public school system from every zip code
5 including children in shelter, temporary housing has
6 both an appropriate device and internet service?

7 MEISHA PORTER: I'm confident that all of our
8 students are adequately prepared with devices for LTE
9 Wi-Fi enabled devices, yes.

10 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: And that because the last
11 year, the iPads yes, come with internet and Lauren
12 and I, we had spoken about this. But the Chromebooks
13 did not and many kids last year did not have internet
14 service at home.

15 MEISHA PORTER: Yeah, yeah.

16 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Are we ensuring at this
17 moment; is there additional; are there Chromebooks
18 with internet service and hot spots available for
19 kids in schools, if any of them right now?

20 MEISHA PORTER: So, you know, we've made a
21 commitment through all of the resources that we've
22 received through the Council, through the federal
23 recovery act, to ensure that our students are digital
24 citizens. And so, we've also and will continue to
25 invest in by purchasing, not only the iPads that were

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2 Wi-Fi and LTE enabled but also Chromebooks that are
3 Wi-Fi and LTE enabled. We also have access to mobile
4 hot spots to make available to students.

5 So, you know, I recognize having led in the Bronx
6 that you know, when we went into this pandemic and
7 put devices in students hands, it wasn't just about
8 the device. It was about the access to the Wi-Fi to
9 actually leverage the device to engage. And so,
10 that's something we made a commitment as a system to
11 making sure every student has that level of access.

12 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: And are you aware of any
13 requests to central at this time of internet service
14 or Wi-Fi hot spots or devices?

15 MEISHA PORTER: I'll ask Lauren to speak to that.

16 LAUREN SICILIANO: Thank you for the question.
17 So, as the Chancellor mentioned, we are continuing to
18 distribute devices. We announced as part of the
19 academic recovery plan earlier this summer that we
20 would be distributing an additional 175,000 LTE
21 enabled devices. That is a combination of iPads and
22 predominantly Chromebooks, all LTE enabled. Meaning
23 they come with data plans.

24 We have reached out to all schools to let them
25 know the number of devices that they should expect.

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And they are letting us know what they need at the same time.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: And how many at this time Lauren are you aware of in terms of the requests for devices and internet?

LAUREN SICILIANO: So, uhm, I need to check the numbers but we have more than enough supply. So, we are getting those confirmations in an enrolling basis and sending out the devices. And this is so that each school has enough devices for all of their students K-12.

So, it's not that a student you know immediately needs a device right now that they don't have. This is so that they will have enough supply so that at any point, they would have enough for all students K-12. They also of course continue to have the devices that we distributed over the past year and a half.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: So, Lauren, just to be clear, if any of our colleagues here in the City Council get contacted by parents, school communities, that a child does not have internet service and the child does not have a device, you're saying that DOE has them available for that school right there and then?

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2 LAUREN SICILIANO: Absolutely and please continue
3 to escalate those. We also have thousands of hot
4 spots still available, so if there are any school
5 communities or individual students that you are
6 hearing about that are struggling with this, we have
7 the resources to help.

8 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Final thing Chancellor with
9 regards to remote learning option. NYSUT actually
10 has some language around remote learning that I was
11 reviewing. It talks about while the Department will
12 not require schools that are open for full-time in-
13 person instruction to provide online remote
14 instruction, districts may work with students and
15 families to offer remote options if it is deemed to
16 be in the best educational interest of the student.
17 And I will continue where it says, districts should
18 consider the value of online capacity developed in
19 response to the pandemic to expand programmatic
20 offerings and to offer remote learning opportunities
21 that are responsive to student needs. This can be
22 done directly through cooperative agreements with
23 other school districts or through boards or
24 cooperative educational services.

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2 And it concludes by saying that this is for
3 students who have otherwise struggled, have excelled
4 with remote learning. So, NYSUT doesn't require it.
5 It does not say you have to do it but it certainly
6 says it should be at least considered and explored.
7 Not just for medically fragile students but for kids
8 who actually have excelled. There are - I have heard
9 in some cases where students have excelled in remote
10 learning. I hear from some, particularly families of
11 younger children who cannot get a vaccine at this
12 time in my district and other parts of the city,
13 where they are very fearful and nervous to send their
14 kid back. Their child has asthma, which asthma is
15 not listed Commissioner as one of the chronic
16 conditions on the list where they can receive a
17 medical accommodation. Is that correct?

18 DAVE CHOKSHI: The list of conditions that is in
19 the homecoming handbook for medically necessary
20 instruction. I want to clarify. Those are when an
21 application is submitted with one of those
22 conditions. They will be automatically approved as
23 long as it is of course a valid submission.

24 For any other conditions, of course a family may
25 still submit an application for medically necessary

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2 instruction because in many cases it depends on the
3 details and the nuances of the specific case.

4 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Okay, so Chancellor just if
5 you could answer, even that NYSUT is saying to school
6 districts it should be at least considered. There
7 are kids who have excelled in this area. I'm not
8 saying everyone but there are kids who have excelled.
9 Why is remote option not on the table at this time
10 for families that can request it?

11 MEISHA PORTER: So, I think it's also important
12 to note that NYSUT, the Department of Education, the
13 American Pediatric Association, the CDC, all
14 recommend in-person learning. They all recommend
15 that as the most appropriate way for students to
16 learn. We know, all of us know the best learning
17 that happens, happens between students and teachers
18 in-person and in classrooms.

19 And so, we've leaned into what we know works best
20 for students. However, recognize that there are
21 families who have some concerns, which is why we
22 looked at providing an option for students who are
23 medically fragile. And we also looked at this option
24 you know because there as a former principal who has
25 had to have students on home instruction, that system

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2 needed to be revamped and we've learned through this
3 pandemic that we have multiple modes of educating
4 students that allow us to revamp that home
5 instruction system. And so, we're offering the
6 option to engage our medically fragile students
7 because those are the families I continue to hear
8 from. I continue to hear from families who have
9 medically fragile students who are under 12 and
10 unable to be vaccinated as a call for a remote
11 option.

12 And we've always had an option for those
13 students. And so, I think that this opportunity
14 provides us with the moment that we not only enhance
15 that opportunity but leverage what we've learned in
16 the pandemic to make it more engaging, more
17 connecting and keep those students who are removed
18 from the building deeply connected to their school
19 community. And so, we will continue to lean into
20 providing the instruction that we believe works best
21 for students and that is ensuring that they have the
22 opportunity to learn in person with their teachers in
23 their school community.

24 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: And I appreciate that
25 answer Chancellor and last thing and Mark Levine will

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2 take over questioning. Other localities also had the
3 approach of everyone back.

4 MEISHA PORTER: Hmm, hmm.

5 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: I could read off a list of
6 cities that have said the same thing. Everyone back.
7 The City of Dallas was kind of forced to make changes
8 within the first couple weeks because attendance was
9 dismal. And it forced them to consider remote
10 options. New Jersey, the Governor, very publicly has
11 been saying over and over again, everyone back. He
12 still says everyone back. But interestingly, his
13 education department sent guidance to school
14 districts across New Jersey saying, you can begin to
15 prepare remote options if you wish to do that.

16 So, and in the NYSUT guidance, it says that in
17 the event of school closures, schools must, not may,
18 must have remote or some instructional plans in
19 place. I didn't see that in the homecoming guidebook
20 about if a school closes down, this is what a school
21 should do. It says that school closures are
22 determined by the Health Department. It does not
23 indicate instructionally what the next steps are.

24 So, can you just let us know, are there, will
25 there be guidance shared with school communities

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2 about that and can you respond to what's happening
3 across America where folks that said everyone back,
4 are now moving in the direction of an option should
5 be on the table.

6 MEISHA PORTER: So, New York City has and will
7 continue to be the gold standard and continue to add
8 those protocols. But we are watching. We are
9 watching what happens across the state. We're
10 watching what's happening across the country because
11 we know we have to be making decisions as we go
12 along. We also and our school leaders and school
13 communities know that in the event that we need to
14 pivot to a remote - opt to remote, we're prepared to
15 do that.

16 We learned a lot in the pandemic. That's why
17 we're going to keep technology in the hands of our
18 students. That's why we're going to continue to
19 provide professional learning to our teachers around
20 how we engage in remote platforms. And so, we are
21 prepared to do that. We've talked in the handbook
22 about and we'll talk more about in the event that we
23 need to quarantine, what instruction will look like
24 and how instruction will continue.

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2 And so, we're not, you know I've heard people say
3 don't throw out the baby with the bath water. We're
4 not doing that. We are taking this tool that we've
5 learned and leaned into and using it to enhance and
6 build out our system.

7 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you. Sorry Mark.
8 Thank you Mark, sorry.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: Thank you so much Mr.
10 Chair. Thank you for that excellent line of
11 questioning. In past vaccination drives in the city,
12 such as against polio, we have vaccinated in school
13 buildings. Are we able to vaccinate against COVID in
14 school buildings in every middle and high school?

15 MEISHA PORTER: So, we, I mean, we announced this
16 morning, the Mayor announced this morning that at our
17 sites where we have students 12 and over, we're going
18 to be vaccinating our students. And we're really
19 excited about the opportunity to do that.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: So, I'm sorry, there was
21 a new announcement today you said?

22 MEISHA PORTER: Yes.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: Could you just repeat
24 what the new plan is?

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2 MEISHA PORTER: So, you want to talk specifically
3 about it Kevin?

4 KEVIN MORAN: Sure. Sure, thank you for the
5 question. Part of our, we're calling it the Vax to
6 School Campaign is to offer for willing families and
7 willing students, the opportunity to be vaccinated
8 during the first week of school. We've looked at
9 every single school building that services students
10 ages 12 and up and are setting up that opportunity
11 for families for the first week of school if they'd
12 like to come in. And to Councilman Treyger's point
13 earlier, provide information at that site while they
14 wait the 15 minutes to upload into our vaccine
15 portal.

16 So, this will be something that is widely
17 advertised as an opportunity by no means mandatory
18 but it's something we're strongly encouraging based
19 upon what we've seen thus far.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: Who will be doing that
21 vaccination?

22 KEVIN MORAN: We've contracted with agencies to
23 come out and actually do the vaccines.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: And that will be all
25 middle and high schools for the first week?

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KEVIN MORAN: That's correct.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: Commissioner, you cited the citywide rates on teenager vaccination. We know there is enormous variation amongst communities and amongst school communities. There's going to be some buildings where probably 90 percent or more of students are vaccinated and probably somewhere, I don't know maybe less than 25 percent are vaccinated. Do we have, do you have data to identify those schools where vaccination rates are particularly low? And more importantly, do you have a plan to surge resources in those schools or change protocols or make more intensive efforts to build confidence in the vaccine?

DAVE CHOKSHI: Yes and thank you Chair for this incredibly important question because as you've heard from us before, vaccination is the central pillar that helps us to keep students and school communities safe. With respect to your question, yes, we already have some data with respect to by geography what those varying rates are. And that has already helped us to target. As you well know, with respect to our vaccine equity efforts, how we can focus resources,

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2 attention, our partnerships on building vaccine
3 confidence in those places.

4 And I'll just add one more note. Uhm, as my
5 colleagues have described in terms of the Vax to
6 School Campaign, this is something that we have
7 already started. We had vaccination sites at
8 multiple summer rising schools and we saw very good
9 uptake at those schools. Very important because as
10 you're pointing out, it's not just about the
11 injection itself. It's about the conversations that
12 happen around it to answer parents questions, to
13 answer kids questions and to make sure that people
14 are comfortable and have access to the vaccine.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: Thank you. So, because
16 of the contagiousness of Delta, experts are advising
17 higher quality masks and this can actually be hard
18 for families to secure partly because masks like this
19 uh, KF94 or higher are more expensive but also hard
20 to find for smaller people. Ideally the city could
21 provide those and that would mean, that would mean
22 offering millions potentially over the course of the
23 year. Do we have supply sufficient to offer higher
24 quality masks to all students?

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MEISHA PORTER: Absolutely, I mean, we have uh, I'll let Kevin talk specifically because his team has led the work around making sure that we have PPE in our schools. Making sure we have variations of PPE based on different needs of our children but we also, it's important to note that is not something that our school budgets are paying for. That's something that the central budget is paying for and ensuring that every school has a 30-day supply of PPE on hand every single day.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: But just to clarify, that PPE is not — last year they were cloth masks, very basic or traditional service masks, which are also considered a lower caliber. But this year you are going to be offering higher caliber masks such as KF94 etc.?

KEVIN MORAN: That's correct, we currently have 30-day supply at all schools and KN95's for staff as well. Currently, we have an essential location over 500,000 available if a school does for some reason fall short of their 30-day supply. So, they will be made available and we'll follow-up specifically on the KN94's.

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DAVE CHOKSHI: Chair, if I may just add briefly on that. From the scientific perspective, the most important thing is to ensure that people are wearing masks consistently and properly. That means it has to have a snug fit against the sides of the face. Optimally involves multiple layers to the mask and just on a more human note, you know as a father of a small child, sometimes it's not you know the KF94, the KN95, the mask that a child can actually wear it consistently and properly through the entire school day. So, my message to parents is, find a mask that works and that fits and that is comfortable for a child so that they are protected over the duration of the whole school day.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: Thank you. Every expert has identified testing as one of the key pillars to safety in school buildings and many have identified a goal of testing every week the entire school community and there are some school systems which are at least attempting to achieve that goal in other parts of the country and world. But the city's goal is only ten percent of the school community every two weeks, which I believe is half on a percentage basis relative to the standard in the past school year.

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2 So, why are we testing a lower percentage of
3 students this year given the greater contagiousness
4 of Delta. Why not set a much more ambitious goal as
5 other systems around the country are?

6 DAVE CHOKSHI: I'm happy to start on this and
7 then my Education colleagues should chime in. Uhm,
8 thanks again Chair for highlighting this. First,
9 very important for us to put testing in the context
10 of that layered approach to prevention that we've
11 described. It is an important layer but it is one of
12 multiple methods that we have to keep kids safe.
13 With respect to testing specifically, let me just
14 break down some of the ways in which we have to think
15 about testing. First, we can divide it into
16 diagnostic testing and screening testing.

17 Diagnostic testing will be available for every
18 student if they are exhibiting symptoms, you know
19 they will have a ready pathway to ensure that they
20 are tested quickly, so that then, they can get
21 connected to the rest of the important public health
22 interventions. That's tracing, isolation and
23 quarantine.

24 With respect to screening testing or you know
25 survey or surveillance testing, uhm, what you

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2 described in terms of our approach with ten percent
3 every two weeks, we should think about that as a
4 floor rather than a ceiling.

5 MEISHA PORTER: Right, hmm, hmm.

6 DAVE CHOKSHI: Uhm, and the reason for that is a
7 few. First, we have the ability to strategically
8 deploy more testing resources based on what we are
9 finding from that survey testing. The second is that
10 the survey testing is an adjunct to the country's
11 largest community-based testing apparatus that we
12 have. And we saw both over the last school year as
13 well as over the summer, uhm, the magnitude of that
14 testing was very, very important to ensure that cases
15 were found and diagnosed and again, appropriately
16 isolated and quarantined.

17 And the final thing that I'll say is that this is
18 an area where we will continue to follow the science
19 and the data and if there are adjustments that need
20 to be made as time goes on, of course we will make
21 those calibrations.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: Okay, I just wanted to
23 clear that survey testing you are using the terms so
24 people understand. It's helpful to get a sense of
25 the trends throughout the system. Very important for

1
2 epidemiology. That's different than trying to put
3 the brakes on every outbreak. You're not going to be
4 able to do that if you are testing ten percent every
5 two weeks, which is why other systems are going for
6 much more ambitious numbers.

7 This is an extremely resource intensive
8 undertaking. I get that. The staff resources, the
9 lab resources, the logistics. But to me that argues
10 for uh, planning for now to go really big not waiting
11 to see how the year goes. But I do want to ask about
12 uhm, rapid testing, self-test kits which can be used
13 at home. These are much more than they were at the
14 start of last school year widely available and the
15 price has come down considerably.

16 Today is the first day of school in Israel and
17 they have given all two and a half million kids a
18 home test kit, a self-test kit that they are to use
19 before the first day of school, which is a very
20 powerful screen before people come together in
21 person. Why can't the city acquire millions of these
22 kinds of kits. Use their bulk buying power and uh,
23 and give these to families to use not to give an
24 epidemiological view of the trend but to stop
25 outbreaks before they spread?

1
2 DAVE CHOKSHI: Thank you for this important
3 question as well. Our city's Test and Trace Corp
4 does employ at home testing already. Particularly
5 when close contacts are identified. Those at home
6 testing kits are provided for them. What you're
7 describing in terms of the approach in Israel and
8 other places is something that we are following
9 closely with respect to understanding uhm, you know
10 scientifically whether there is additional benefit
11 from that approach and it's something that you know
12 that we can consider with respect to our testing
13 approach.

14 But very importantly, I don't want people to
15 leave with the impression that we don't have a
16 version of that already. We do through our massive
17 community testing apparatus, which is readily
18 available to families, including to children. And
19 which has been vitally important with respect to
20 breaking the chains of transmission over the last
21 school year and over the summer. That is something
22 that is free of charge for all families, which we
23 know that people are availing themselves of but
24 importantly has to be put into that broader context,
25 both in terms of connecting testing results to

1
2 contact tracing and isolation and quarantine when
3 appropriate as well as testing as one part of the
4 multiple layers of prevention that we've described.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: Right, but the system
6 right now relies on people leaving their home and
7 going somewhere and potentially if they are at the
8 wrong site waiting in line and that's just not
9 realistic if it's going to happen continually on a
10 massive scale for families. And experts have also
11 suggested that this could help speed the return from
12 quarantine. That you could even have a default.
13 That if you are getting rapid tests negative, that
14 even on the first day you could return because the
15 rapid tests are good at assessing contagiousness.

16 I'm not in a position to evaluate the science of
17 that and this isn't the place to do it but there
18 clearly are vastly opportunities opened up when
19 testing is done on a home base as it is in other
20 parts of the world.

21 I want to move quickly so we can just get to
22 other members. Uh, our school nurses are more
23 important than ever and we've had a struggle to
24 secure full-time permanent hired nurses in every
25 school building, in every school. And that has meant

1
2 that we've often had to resort to temp nurses or
3 contracted nurses would be a more appropriate term.
4 Sometimes they travel between buildings. Can we
5 ensure that we have a full-time permanent nurse in
6 every school beginning on the first day of school?

7 MEISHA PORTER: Yes, we, you know, I, listen, as
8 a principal, I remember that struggle and in this
9 moment and in these times, having a nurse in every
10 school building is more important than ever. And so,
11 we've worked to ensure that we have that in place and
12 that we have it in place from day one.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: Thank you. Finally, uhm,
14 the question of how close contact is defined leaves a
15 great deal of room for interpretation and the CDC has
16 offered very specific language about that and uh, how
17 broadly or narrowly you define close contact if there
18 is a case in a given classroom for example. Impacts
19 enormously how many kids are sent home. Could you
20 explain how we're defining close contact and the
21 extent to which there is any difference between how
22 the CDC defines that?

23 DAVE CHOKSHI: Certainly, we're defining close
24 contact as an exposure of a duration, which makes us
25 think that someone is at higher risk of developing

1
2 the infection. Generally, that means there is at
3 least you know ten minutes of exposure within three
4 to six feet of another individual.

5 This does depend on vaccination status as well.
6 So, even if someone is identified as a close contact
7 but if they are fully vaccinated, then they are not
8 recommended for quarantine in that case. Although we
9 do recommend that they get tested within three to
10 five days of that exposure and it depends as you're
11 pointing out on the specific circumstances within the
12 school building.

13 We have taken a more protective approach than
14 some of what is laid out in the CDC guidance with
15 respect to unvaccinated individuals, particularly for
16 example, in elementary schools where children are not
17 yet eligible for vaccination. Where if there is an
18 exposure, than the recommendation is for them to
19 quarantine for ten days.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: But if a child tests
21 positive, uhm, would another student who sits far
22 across the room from them be identified as a close
23 contact and therefore need to quarantine?

24 DAVE CHOKSHI: If they are in the same classroom,
25 yes because usually you know the real world of

1
2 classroom dynamics is such that, exposure is likely
3 to have occurred. There maybe some nuances depending
4 on specific circumstances but in general, yes, they
5 would be considered a close contact.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: So, is it correct to say
7 that we have a slightly more I guess conservative
8 definition of close contact in the CDC guidance?

9 DAVE CHOKSHI: This is one of the areas where we
10 believed it was important to be more protective than
11 the CDC guidance recommendation.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: Okay. Thank you
13 Commissioner. Thank you Chancellor. And back to you
14 Mr. Chair.

15 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Uh, thank you very much
16 Chair again for your leadership. I know that Council
17 Member Louis had a pressing question. Is that
18 correct?

19 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: Thank you Council Member
20 for letting me go before you. Thank you so much
21 Chairs Treyger and Levine for organizing today's
22 hearing. Thank you Chancellor Porter and
23 Commissioner Chokshi for your time here. I'll be
24 really quick. I have two questions and one request.
25

1
2 The first question is if there happens to be
3 social workers and I'm happy to hear about the 500 or
4 school psychologists that decide to opt out of
5 inoculating or getting vaccinated, what are the
6 alternatives you're thinking about to provide the
7 support services to students? I wanted to know if
8 DOHMH and H&H uhm, is requiring vaccinations of your
9 personnel that work in schools or with CBO's?

10 And the last thing was a request. While iPads
11 are great, we love I-pads, they are easy to utilize.
12 They are not easy for instruction. So, there are
13 students that were having a hard time when they
14 initially receive the I-pads, they weren't, it wasn't
15 conducive with instruction depending on the platform
16 that teacher was utilizing. So, is there any way
17 that we could focus on Chromebooks? Having a
18 conversation with DOITT to just focus on Chromebooks
19 as an option. And that's it for me. Thank you so
20 much for your time.

21 MEISHA PORTER: Thank you Council Member Louis.
22 And I will tell you, you are the school whisperer.
23 I've heard that from many school leaders and teachers
24 about the difference between how you can leverage an
25 I-pad and a Chromebook instructionally, which is why

1
2 we've made an investment, significant investment in
3 Chromebooks as well and also, have worked with
4 principals to help them decide what works best for
5 their community.

6 So, we hear you and we've made that investment.
7 You know our - I agree with you. As a principal, I
8 had a full-time social worker in my building and it
9 made a difference and we weren't in a post - we
10 weren't in a pandemic. We weren't returning to
11 school after not having not been in school for 18
12 months. It's our expectation that every staff member
13 who works in a school building is vaccinated. And
14 so, we are in the process of working with the unions
15 through what that means if a person chooses not to.
16 But any person who works in our buildings will be
17 vaccinated and work with our students.

18 We also have Deputy Chancellor Robinson to talk
19 about our social work pool. Because we're worked
20 really hard to build up that pool so that we could
21 recruit for our schools because we knew that this was
22 going to be an important moment for our system.
23 Deputy Chancellor Robinson.

24 LASHAWN ROBINSON: Thank you Chancellor and thank
25 you so much for that question. We understand the

1
2 mental health and wellness component of the work that
3 we have to do to safely return our young people and
4 our educators back to our school communities. And we
5 recognize that our social workers and our guidance
6 counselors, they are critical to making this work
7 happen.

8 We also have the support of our community
9 schools. Thank you so much to Council, we're able to
10 increase the number of community schools that we have
11 and they provide a plethora of supports in our school
12 communities, including mental health and wellness
13 support. We also have school-based mental health
14 clinics on hand that will be readily available. For
15 the first time this year, we're focused on more
16 intense supports in classrooms. So, really aligning
17 the social emotional learning. Any academics under
18 Chancellor Porter's leadership. That's the work that
19 we're engaged in. We train over 75,000 educators on
20 trauma informed care. How to recognize trauma.
21 We're partnering with parents. We have over 900
22 parent leaders who worked with us over the summer and
23 will be in schools as partners to other parents,
24 supporting mental health and wellness.
25

1
2 So, we have a robust plan in place including
3 resources. We also have NYC Well, which is a partner
4 and a process with us. Health & Hospitals, DOH and
5 others that recognize the seriousness of this moment
6 from a mental health and wellness lens as well. And
7 we're here to provide full support in this area.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: Thank you and if you could
9 think about students that are going to be receiving
10 home instruction. It's great to have all these
11 things in place but what about the students that are
12 at home? So, we want to consider alternatives for
13 them. Thank you so much for your time.

14 LASHAWN ROBINSON: Thank you.

15 MEISHA PORTER: I'm sorry, just Council Member
16 Louis, that's another reason why we're really looking
17 at how we build this out because we know, we want to
18 make sure that our students who aren't in the
19 building, are still connected to a school and a
20 community, a school community and all of the
21 resources that come with it.

22 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: And next, we'll turn to
23 Council Member Brannan.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: Thank you Chairs. Thank
25 you Chancellor and Dr. Chokshi for being here today.

1
2 I think it goes without saying when it comes to our
3 kids and those we entrust in their care, we have to
4 do not just the best we can but everything we can to
5 make sure that they're safe and we're still in the
6 middle of a global pandemic. So, extreme caution and
7 care really has to be our top priority.

8 And while I certainly appreciate that the Mayor
9 has been focused on getting everyone back to school
10 and back in our classrooms, which we know there is no
11 substitute for in classroom and in classroom
12 education, it's just confusing to me when every day I
13 hear of another school district uhm, far lesser than
14 our great school system here in the City of New York.
15 I think there is over 80 of the largest 100 school
16 districts across the country are offering and remote
17 option.

18 Uhm, and it sounds like the DOE is preparing for
19 this but sort of holding this card for some reason
20 and I don't understand why. I think there is a lot
21 of parents who would like to have that option and I'm
22 confused as to why we're not just putting that
23 forward now. Why are we waiting for an inevitability
24 where that may or may not be the case?

1
2 MEISHA PORTER: So, I think there are two things
3 there. One, we're not holding a card. We have put
4 out our medically fragile option for families who
5 want to opt into an option other than coming in-
6 person in a building.

7 I would also say this. We know that in the event
8 of a closure, in the event of a quarantine, we have
9 to be prepared to pivot to remote. Uhm, we are going
10 to continue to build our system and work to be able
11 to do that. And so, we're not holding out waiting
12 for something to happen. We are focusing in on what
13 we know is important and that is to get our babies
14 back and in-person. What we've heard from all of the
15 experts and all of our, even our families and
16 students, while we know that there is a sense of
17 nervousness, we know what works best for students.
18 We know what works best for children.

19 You know, I have had to grapple with the same
20 decisions that parents across New York City are
21 making as I prepare to send my eleventh grader back
22 into a school building on public transportation. And
23 so, I understand the concern but we're not holding
24 back a thing. We are making sure that our system is
25 ready to pivot should we need to pivot and also

1
2 making sure we have an option for our medically
3 fragile students.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: Okay but I guess, that's
5 understood and I appreciate that. I guess what I'm
6 hearing though is there is a contingency but there is
7 not – what other school districts are doing is giving
8 an option up front. They are offering the option.
9 What you are talking about is different, it's a
10 contingency.

11 I want to keep moving. So, as of today, how many
12 of our schools in the city are over 100 percent
13 capacity?

14 MEISHA PORTER: Kevin.

15 KEVIN MORAN: All of our principals were provided
16 with capacity reports across the City of New York and
17 looked at what they were historically and where they
18 are today. If you need updated capacity reports, we
19 usually publish online. I will make sure you get a
20 copy.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: Okay, I'm asking because
22 what I'm hearing from a lot of parents and teachers
23 as well, is how will social distancing work in let's
24 say a high school building that's at 183 percent
25 capacity?

1
2 KEVIN MORAN: Yeah, we had a working group put
3 together and I really appreciate this question. We
4 divided our schools into different tiers and looked
5 at what those capacity constraints were. We looked
6 at solutions that focused on staffing, that looked at
7 alternate spacing. That looked at alternate spaces
8 within a building but also looked at alternate
9 programs and we've even had schools that are going to
10 come in a little earlier and the most crowded, with
11 basically half the enrollment throughout the course
12 of the day. So, say for an example it had 4,000
13 students and it's considered over crowded. We would
14 never in this model have more than 2,500 kids in a
15 building at any one given time.

16 So, really, like half that capacity. So, you
17 know it does require some flexibility. It requires
18 some student and family engagement. It requires some
19 really out of the box thinking. It requires union
20 engagement and you come out with a model that works
21 for kids and families. Because you know, when we
22 look back, we share this mutuality Council Member
23 about how we're getting through a pandemic and there
24 are some give and some takes. And so, some kids are
25 coming in at 7:15, some kids are staying until 5:30.

1
2 So, but that's how we're doing it. There is
3 multiple approaches. We spend many months over the
4 summer waiting for the CDC guidance and the states
5 guidance and we're going to toe the line. And so,
6 we're getting three feet wherever possible and you
7 could assume in a classroom the spatial orientation
8 varies. We've removed furniture in some instances.
9 So, these are unique, I'll be out of the school
10 tomorrow. I go to school as much as I can and we
11 support schools. Sometimes it's moving furniture,
12 sometimes moving somethings they have acquired over
13 the last 15-20 years that have filled the classroom
14 and we can gain space back through storage.

15 And so, there's a lot happening there but if
16 there are those in your district, I do know that
17 there are some over crowded schools in your district.
18 We can talk about it.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: Yeah. I guess so, but
20 as of right now, if I'm a parent and I have a kid in
21 an over crowded high school, let's say the one, this
22 hypothetical 4,000 kids, it's over crowded. At this
23 point right now on September 1st, do I know what my
24 kids schedule is going to be if he's got to be, he or
25

1
2 she has to be in a school that's going to be at half
3 capacity because of social distancing?

4 KEVIN MORAN: Yeah, our school leaders and
5 principals and superintendents are working with
6 families in real time and making those adjustments
7 and so, that's definitely something that happens and
8 families will be communicated with, absolutely.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: Okay, uhm, I think my
10 colleague Council Member Louis asked, but I wanted to
11 clarify. For 3K, PreK early learn teachers and staff
12 and CBO's, is there a vaccine requirement there?
13 Because I've heard different things.

14 MEISHA PORTER: Not yet. At this time, we're
15 focused on staff members who work in all of our DOE
16 buildings.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: So, is this a state,
18 city thing then?

19 MEISHA PORTER: It is a you know, obviously you
20 know we're not the decision makers. It is you know
21 every agency is being looked at differently as the
22 Mayor makes decisions about vaccines.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: So, as of right now, 3K
24 PreK early learn teachers and staff who are working
25

1
2 and working at CBO's, there is not a vaccine
3 requirement?

4 MEISHA PORTER: Today, there is not.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: Okay, that sounds
6 insane. Uhm, okay, uh -

7 MEISHA PORTER: But let me just clarify.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: Yeah.

9 MEISHA PORTER: They are in the vax or test area.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: Right, you have to show
11 48 hours or whatever it is.

12 MEISHA PORTER: Yes.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: No, is the city, are we
14 pushing to change that so it's streamlined?
15 Everything is the same across the board? Because why
16 would it be different for PreK, 3K and not -

17 MEISHA PORTER: We're focused on what's happening
18 in our school buildings and working with our partner
19 agencies to make decisions about what happens next.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: Okay but all these
21 people are in our care, right? No matter what
22 building they are in. Last thing, I'm hearing from a
23 lot of folks, families of D75 students uhm, who are
24 very concerned with I mean, if you're a student with
25 an IEP, the past 18 months have been a quadruple

1
2 nightmare. What is being done to ensure that those
3 services, the mandated services are provided for
4 those kids?

5 MEISHA PORTER: Yeah, so you know you're
6 absolutely right about what it's been like for
7 students who are most vulnerable and we are going to
8 continue to center and prioritize them. I'm going to
9 ask our Deputy Chief Academic Officer Christina Foti
10 to talk specifically about mandates and supports that
11 we're putting in place for our D75 students but all
12 of our students with IEP's.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: Thank you.

14 MEISHA PORTER: Here you go.

15 CHRISTINA FOTI: Perfect. Thank you Council
16 Member Brannan and for your continued advocacy for
17 our students with IEP's. Uhm, you know we are very
18 excited to be offering recovery services to everyone
19 of our students with IEP's. So, we're not leaving to
20 this to chance. Every student with an IEP is
21 eligible for recovery services this year, which means
22 that we are sending allocations to schools that will
23 allow them to provide after school and/or Saturday
24 programs where small group instruction will be
25 delivered to our students with IEP's as well as

1
2 additional related services. Recognizing that the
3 need is great and we have to make up uhm, in some
4 instances, make up related services. But in all
5 instances, make sure that students receive not only
6 what is outlined on their IEP's during the school day
7 but that additional services are provided to every
8 child with an IEP.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: Thank you. Your office
10 has been fantastic. You know, obviously, I always
11 worry about the folks who suffer in silence, the
12 folks that don't know to come to their local Council
13 Member for advocacy. Those are the folks I really
14 try to think about. I'll just end with, I mean, it
15 still just seems crazy to me that if at some point
16 we're going to offer a remote option, I don't know
17 why we wouldn't just join the other 80 something
18 school districts across the country that are offering
19 a remote option, not as a contingency. Just offering
20 it right up front if there are families that want
21 that. I feel like it's going to happen anyway. I
22 don't see why we wouldn't offer it now but that's all
23 I've got. Thank you Chairs.

24 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Uh, sure Council Member and
25 I just want to make sure I clarify something I heard

1
2 Mr. Moran. When Council Member Brannan asked about
3 the physical distancing in schools, uhm, I have
4 reviewed over and over again the language with
5 regards to physical distancing both from CDC, state,
6 local. Uhm, and Dr. Chokshi, feel free to weigh in
7 here as well. There is language I know that talks
8 about where feasible, where possible and it also
9 talks about that it should not prohibit kids from
10 entering the building. However, the language shifts
11 to, to be more stronger from where feasible to must
12 or shall when it comes to lunch. Can anyone speak to
13 the physical? Is there a requirement for schools to
14 have physical distancing when kids are eating during
15 lunch? Can anyone speak to this?

16 KEVIN MORAN: Yeah, thank you for the question.
17 The current guidance, your right. It says three feet
18 where possible. And we're coming up, we've had our
19 directors of school food.

20 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Kevin, does that apply to
21 lunch as well?

22 KEVIN MORAN: That's correct. That's correct.

23 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: So, when kids, when the
24 masks are off and the kids are eating, they, it's not
25 required?

1
2 KEVIN MORAN: That's right. Yeah, what we
3 recommend is that we use outdoor spaces, alternate
4 spaces within the building. Larger public assembly
5 spaces, to really get at it. We go school to school
6 with principals and we look at what's in that
7 cafeteria. What's that spatial orientation? What's
8 the size of the furniture? How much furniture and
9 ultimately, we measure the cubic feet per minute and
10 our exchanges per hour. We recently did a review of
11 a high school last week, a large high school where we
12 rely solely on outside air and some exhausters in the
13 space and we were turning 15 air exchanges per hour
14 without our air purifiers and we had recently brought
15 in air purifiers that will up air exchanges to two to
16 four exchanges on top of the 15. And as early as
17 this morning, I was at a large high school and we
18 were seeing nearly 20 air exchanges per hour in the
19 cafeteria and that also was being done without the
20 air purifiers on.

21 So, we are putting a multi-layered approach when
22 students are demasked and are eating and the duration
23 of that time being limited and rotating you know
24 where we can in ultimate spaces. So, we are working
25 with principals on site specific solutions but it is

1
2 three feet where possible and we're doing everything
3 we can to make sure we comply.

4 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Because, what I'm reading
5 here from NYSUT, CDC and they refer to CDC. CDC
6 states that permitting large groups of students to
7 eat in the cafeteria should be, should be based on
8 community transmission rates. The Commissioner
9 testified that we have high transmission across the
10 five boroughs. It says here, it goes on, schools
11 should maximize physical distance as much as possible
12 when students are moving through the food service
13 line and while eating especially indoors. Using
14 additional spaces and outdoor seating can facilitate
15 distancing. School should consider limiting meals to
16 classrooms in areas with substantial; so this is the
17 key sentence here also.

18 Schools should consider limiting meals to
19 classrooms in areas with substantial or high
20 transmission rates. Uhm, will kids be eating lunch
21 in their classrooms?

22 KEVIN MORAN: That will happen. I was remiss in
23 not thanking our school cafeteria workers and those
24 that served over 110 million meals over the last
25 year.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Amen to that. I agree 100
3 percent on that.

4 KEVIN MORAN: They literally met students where
5 they were and that was inclusive of bringing the
6 lunches from the café to the classroom. And so, I
7 really appreciate them and all that they do. And so,
8 that's something where we talk to the principal, the
9 school food manager and the school staff there and
10 what's possible.

11 So, the idea is, to where possible means where
12 possible and we get out there and we go, we serve in
13 classrooms. We serve potentially in other places
14 that are public assembly. We do serve and meet
15 outside and in high schools, you know, grab and go is
16 a popular option to.

17 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: But Dr. Chokshi, you
18 understand and it's the last point here and I'll turn
19 to my colleagues. You understand the contradiction
20 with a conflicting message to the public is that
21 there seems to be stricter rules in terms of indoor
22 dining or at a bar, restaurant when it comes to
23 eating lunch in a school community. Can you speak to
24 that?

1
2 DAVE CHOKSHI: Well, look, there is a very clear
3 recommendation with respect to how to keep kids safe
4 during meal times. The vaccine requirement that
5 applies for all staff is one of those layers of
6 precautions. But as my colleague has pointed out,
7 the language is, we should maximize physical
8 distancing where possible and this is important
9 during meal times because it is, it is a time when
10 children will go without masks for some period. But
11 there are ways to mitigate that and that's why we
12 keep referring back to the layers of prevention.
13 When you don't have a mask on, that does mean that
14 ventilation as Mr. Moran just described as well as
15 distancing become more important. But very
16 importantly, in the New York state education
17 guidance, as well as the recent Commissioners
18 determination from the New York State Department of
19 Health, all of that language mirrors what is in the
20 CDC guidance, which says yes, maximize physical
21 distancing in the ways the Department of Education is
22 doing. But this should not preclude in-person
23 learning. So, we have to hold these goals and our
24 hands together.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: But Commissioner, would you
3 agree as a medical professional, CDC guidance has
4 evolved and changed and sometimes historically has
5 not always changed for all the right reasons. And
6 also, the city is very, I mean, I follow this
7 closely. The city is very selective where it says,
8 we're meeting CDC guidance in these areas but then it
9 says in other areas, we're exceeding CDC guidance.

10 So, I, I get this but I'm just saying that the
11 public is hearing, parents are hearing, kids are
12 hearing that when you go to a bar or restaurant, you
13 have to have, it's mandatory, vaccination critical
14 rules. In school, for young kids, there is still no
15 vaccine. We don't have data yet about the number of
16 kids in the school system who are vaccinated.

17 Quite frankly, we still don't even have data on
18 the entire school communities because principals have
19 also raised that as far as their staff. I know that
20 there is a requirement but there is no language about
21 what happens if they don't get - because I think
22 that's being negotiated I think with labor.

23 So, I'm just pointing out that this concern
24 remains very prevalent. But in the interest of time,
25

1
2 I'll turn it back to Malcolm to call the next Council
3 Member.

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Next, we'll hear from Council
5 Member Grodenchik followed by Council Members
6 Dinowitz, Ampry-Samuel, Borelli, Lander, Riley,
7 Gennaro, Miller, Brooks-Powers, Feliz, Kallos and
8 Levin. Council Member Grodenchik.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Thank you Counsel.
10 Thank you Chair Treyger, Chair Levine. I want to
11 thank the Chancellor and Commissioner and everybody
12 who is here today.

13 Uhm, we've heard a lot and uhm, this is truly a
14 titanic undertaking running the New York City public
15 school system, especially during a pandemic. And a
16 lot of my questions have been asked but one question
17 that hasn't been asked yet is pupil transportation.
18 And I know that we're requiring people that are -
19 thank you. I know that we're requiring people that
20 are working in schools to be vaccinated by a certain
21 date. Are we requiring bus drivers and attendants to
22 be vaccinated as well Chancellor?

23 MEISHA PORTER: I'll let Kevin Moran speak to our
24 work with our bus companies.

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2 KEVIN MORAN: Yeah, Executive Order 74 does not
3 contemplate staff outside of the school building but
4 the safe COVID requirement does require that they are
5 tested weekly or get the vaccine.

6 I will be honest with you, we sent this out very
7 early last winter to our driver's when we were given
8 priority status for teachers, school bus drivers and
9 staff were included in that. We did see a big uptake
10 there. We're working with them now. We have vaccine
11 sites open at 65 Core Street currently. It has been
12 for awhile and we also process at 4436 Vernon
13 Boulevard as well.

14 So, we encourage our staff that are contracted,
15 that work outside of our buildings, obviously to
16 follow the guidance but encouraging vaccines as well.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: It's very concerning
18 to me because many, I have many district 75 schools
19 in my district. Most of those children are
20 transported to school by the yellow buses. And in
21 many cases they're very fragile. Their needs are
22 much greater than the average student and I am
23 concerned because essentially they are in a sealed,
24 almost sealed metal tube. In some cases, I had a
25 child that attends school on Marathon Parkway in

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2 Eastern Queens coming from Staten Island. This was
3 pre-pandemic. I don't know if that's every single
4 day. I don't know if that's still true.

5 Uhm, I would hope that we would move as
6 expeditiously as possible to get all those people
7 vaccinated. The other concern I have is that these
8 buses are used five days a week. What are we doing
9 to ensure that the buses, the vans, all those
10 vehicles are being cleaned every day because you
11 know, kids, even adults tend to be messy at times and
12 uhm, we need to ensure to the best of our ability
13 that these buses are as clean as possible.

14 So, I'd like to hear what somebody has to say
15 about that.

16 KEVIN MORAN: Yeah, that's right. I appreciate
17 the question and commentary. I would add that our
18 school staff very fortunately, we're going to be
19 positioned with the 700 plus buildings in the Vax to
20 School Campaign to make sure that those drivers and
21 attendants unvaccinated to date, have opportunities
22 to go there as well. So, we're going to ensure that
23 on that front.

24 Secondly, on cleaning and anything related to the
25 bus industry currently, we're following the CDC and

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2 state guidance as well. And so, you'll see buses
3 with the windows down, the roof hatch is open, the
4 air noncirculating, mandatory mask wearing. And then
5 what you won't see is what I have inspectors for is
6 the follow-up is the nightly deep cleaning and
7 disinfecting. We were providing very early in the
8 pandemic, bus companies with the electrostatic
9 sprayers and that technology along with the
10 disinfectant, along with hand wipes, along with hand
11 sanitizer and for special education, we provide
12 enhanced PPE. And to Council Member Levine's point
13 earlier, the KN95 was a very popular product assuming
14 like Dr. Chokshi said, students can tolerate it but
15 we also for staff provided face shields. The
16 additional KN95 surgical masks, gloves, etc., to make
17 sure the staff that have extended routes, long period
18 of time, were covered and safe.

19 I will tell you, we follow like everyone, all
20 cases coming into the sick room and we've had cases
21 where students were present and did have - were on
22 the bus and had the virus but anyone on the bus did
23 not because the universal mask wearing because of the
24 enhanced PPE approaches, the ventilation in the buses
25 being open.

1
2 So, we do actively monitor that and we do
3 actively follow the CDC guidance and the state
4 guidance and it's all posted on a website for
5 families to see as well. But I give you the
6 assurance that we have the enhanced PPE and we do the
7 nightly cleaning and disinfecting. And we definitely
8 check with companies to make sure their staff are
9 getting vaccinated.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: And the last question
11 Mr. Chair, uhm, you know sometimes these bus rides
12 can be quite lengthy. The Staten Island to Marathon
13 Parkway route obviously, I don't know who drew that
14 up but uhm, have we done anything and I don't know if
15 we have the ability uhm, to do anything to shorten
16 these bus rides or to you know get more students in
17 closer proximity or an extra bus ride here or there?

18 KEVIN MORAN: Yeah, to the extent possible. We
19 encourage the closest school to one's residence but
20 understanding there are schools that are outside of
21 five miles and require a longer run. We look at that
22 actively and if there are one offs. Our routing team
23 right now, they are making route adjustments. I have
24 families texting me as we talk here today. And so,
25 you know, their information is in [INAUDIBLE 2:03:42]

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2 and they know where the school is. They know the
3 information. So, there is definitely time and space
4 to review a route, certainly if there is IEP mandated
5 time limits. We want to obviously observe that and
6 get it as short as possible, so yes. And there is
7 more to come on that in terms of our overall
8 modernization OPT and the use of technology and
9 routing. So, that's coming, more to come.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Thank you. There's a
11 lot that goes into educating our children every day
12 and you know the New York City school bus system
13 would be one of the largest public transportation
14 networks in the country if it stood by itself.

15 I thank you for your answers and I thank Chair
16 Treyger for indulging me. Thank you.

17 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Council Member
18 Grodenchik. Next, we'll hear from Council Member
19 Dinowitz.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Can you hear me?

21 MEISHA PORTER: Yes.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Good. Thank you. Uhm
23 and thank you uh, Chair Treyger. Not just for the
24 hearing. As you know a year ago at this time, I was
25 a public school teacher in New York City. Uhm, and

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2 one of the big problems we faced then, we are facing
3 it now is what so many families and professional
4 feels a lack of communication, of honest
5 communication about what is happening and during that
6 time, I and so many of my colleagues and families
7 felt comfort with the information that you provided.
8 Where the DOE failed, you are able to provide that
9 information. A sense of comfort and knowledge about
10 what was going on in our schools. So, so I on behalf
11 of myself and my colleagues and families, I do want
12 to thank you from the bottom of my heart for the last
13 year and for what's happening now.

14 Uhm, I, Doc, you spoke about air exchange and I
15 want to just clarify a few points because uhm, it's
16 so important to get this right. You know, a chance
17 that you and both know and believe that social,
18 emotional and mental health of our children is
19 paramount but part of that means knowing that our
20 children are safe when they enter the building. Our
21 professionals are safe when they enter the building.

22 So, I want to talk first about the filters and to
23 clarify something. On the DOE website, it's as if
24 every classroom will have two filters. In your
25 opening remarks, you said every room will have two

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2 filters. So, I just want to clarify, which rooms
3 will have these filters? Does it include guidance
4 suites? Does it include not atypical classrooms,
5 like a shop class, a music class, and any other sort
6 of classroom, which may not fit neatly under the
7 classroom category.

8 MEISHA PORTER: Yeah, thank you Council Member
9 Dinowitz for that question and you're right, it's
10 important that we're clear about what we mean when
11 we're talking about one, I'm going ask Kevin to talk
12 specifically about what rooms. What will be covered
13 in those rooms and what we're talking about when
14 we're discussing air exchanges because like we said,
15 you know our custodial engineers, our facilities
16 teams have done an amazing job to make sure that the
17 air in our building is you know beyond the standards
18 of expectations.

19 KEVIN MORAN: Yeah, thanks for the question and
20 the opportunity to clarify. Uhm, we will have two
21 purifiers in every single classroom that meet or
22 exceed HEPA standard. So, that is concretely.
23 You'll see that in every classroom. You should with
24 the expectation know that we'll put air purifiers
25 where there are congregate staff or students and that

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2 could be in the library. That could be in the
3 cafeteria. The cafeteria, we're really excited about
4 the latest ones we procured to cover up the 3,000
5 square feet. As just more broadly on air purifiers
6 they are solely meant to supplement the underlying
7 system within the school building. And so, while we
8 are very, very pleased with the high efficiency and
9 what happened last year in an environment in 1,400
10 buildings with less than one percent infection in
11 spread in schools, we're really encouraged that the
12 approach is multiple layered approaches as the doctor
13 said were really effective in keeping students and
14 staff safe.

15 So, that was with one air purifier in the
16 classroom. We added the second anticipating and you
17 know not opposed to adding additional as needed. And
18 so, we walk our facility staff walks with school
19 principals. They have instruments to gauge
20 ventilation, one being an anemometer which can assess
21 air flow on the moment and do a calculation. It's
22 with by length, by height of room and it gives you
23 after the CFM reading, it gives you an output and
24 tells you how many air exchanges. And also, a Co2
25 reader which is fundamentally how much air is being

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2 exchanged. You can even do it in this chamber. You
3 can do it in your car. You can do it on a train and
4 how much air, Co2 is still being recirculated and so,
5 those are the concerns for us around ventilation. We
6 want to make sure we're introducing fresh air and
7 we're exhausting fresh air to make sure there is not
8 a viral load should a symptomatic or asymptomatic
9 individual be present in those spaces. So, we're
10 confident that the approaches we have taken have been
11 effective.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: I can tell you're
13 excited about these air purifiers. I never thought
14 I'd say but just to clarify, you've heard from a
15 number of members today, deeper concerns about our
16 children with special needs. And so, when you say
17 classroom, does that include again to be as clear as
18 possible. The guidance suite is not just a
19 congregate setting for adults. It's where our
20 children with emotional needs go when they need help.
21 The conference room is not just a place for adults to
22 where we hold our IEP meetings, right? The space is
23 for – the resource rooms may not be considered a
24 traditional classroom. Will these spaces have these
25 air purifiers?

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KEVIN MORAN: Yes. We'll add them if there is a place where they are not now currently. Every school I've walked they've been their in offices and certainly the main office and you know my assistant principal is in the conference room. So, yes, we've ordered additional purifiers. We will have some centrally and in our borough offices and any school requests, it's very well known. The Chancellor has made it very clear. Schools will be well resourced and make sure they get what they need. Principals will have it and so, I will follow-up on any guidance suits that may not be covered currently.

COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Thank you and uhm, the schools currently have these purifiers right? They are in the buildings now?

MEISHA PORTER: They are in our buildings now and it was wonderful to take a walk through the school building with you Council Member Dinowitz. But they are in our school buildings now. They are also at our borough central offices should schools need additional purifiers in their buildings.

COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: And it seems silly but do you have - you're providing extension cords or

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2 power outlets? I mean it seems silly but having
3 taught a class with one outlet, it's

4 MEISHA PORTER: It is your teacher moment and
5 yes, we do not want schools to have to need a thing
6 to keep our environment safe. To keep our air
7 purifiers working and so, if they need extension
8 cords, if they need surge protectors, we are happy to
9 provide them. But that has not been an issue, I can
10 tell you that.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Good and I do value
12 that you have been in the classroom. So, a lot of
13 the questions that many you know bureaucrats may not
14 think to think about. But I value that you think of
15 them because you've been in the classroom and that's
16 very, very important for someone in your position.

17 It also says on the website that bigger
18 cafeterias will have these filters but it sounds like
19 you're saying every cafeteria will have these
20 filters. Can you clarify if they all will? And if
21 not, what is a bigger cafeteria?

22 KEVIN MORAN: Yeah, thanks for the question and I
23 also was a classroom teacher, so I just want to
24 clarify.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: I didn't mean to leave
3 you out. Everyone is included. Anyone who was a
4 teacher, good job.

5 KEVIN MORAN: Yeah, so uhm, I do share the
6 cafeteria experience and all of our cafeterias will
7 be covered with these air purifiers. We are
8 prioritizing any of the larger spaces where we have
9 spoken with principals and we've talked a little bit
10 about capacity. The numbers appear it's being used
11 and those are actually layer of protection.

12 We've also added exhaust fans, which actually
13 help with air flow on the upper sash of our windows
14 in large cafeterias. It's pretty impressive the air
15 exchange rates we're getting the exceed 20. And so,
16 we anticipate the capacity and we anticipate as well
17 making sure we ramp up the ventilation of those
18 spaces.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Again, you are very
20 excited about that air exchange. And these filters I
21 assume need to be maintained, cleaned? Uhm, you know
22 there has been a lot of reports about these are HEPA
23 standard but they are not HEPA filters. So, can you,
24 can anybody talk about are these HEPA filters and who
25

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2 is maintaining them and how often they will be
3 cleaned or maintained.

4 KEVIN MORAN: Yeah, the nomenclature on is it a
5 HEPA filter perse, or does it meet the HEPA standard?
6 It meet and exceeds the standard and so, it gets down
7 to the point three micron to take out any infectious
8 aerosol. And so, when you put it in the unit, it's
9 been tested against other units who have HEPA filters
10 and theirs have definitely reduced effectiveness.
11 The units we've selected are efficient. They are
12 effective. They cost you know within our reach. And
13 actually, we could procure nearly 150,000 of those
14 units.

15 And so, with that, to your point came the filter
16 replacement schedule. These have two filters. There
17 is an internal, there is a prefilter and there is a
18 second grade filter. And so, we're very impressed
19 with this technology and actually, very impressed
20 with the outcomes you saw last school year.

21 And so, yes, there's a schedule for them to be
22 maintained and the custodian works to make sure that
23 those are replaced in due time.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: So, the custodian is in
25 charge and the custodian is on top of it but, you

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2 know is - well, I'll skip that for time. Uhm, what
3 is a 30-day supply of masks?

4 KEVIN MORAN: Yeah, for 30-day, it's based on
5 student enrollment and so, the burn rate's have been
6 assessed all last year and the system multiplier in
7 fact. And so, how many kids do you have? How many
8 do you expect back? With the assumption every kid
9 and every staff member needs a mask every day. I
10 literally have over one million surgical masks at
11 4436 Vernon Boulevard on pallets. We have an amazing
12 team that showed up, our facilities team, shipping
13 and receiving on our team and led by John Shea.
14 There team has been just dynamic every day, showing
15 up and making sure we're sourced.

16 What happened this year over last in terms of the
17 surge of procurement, we are very lucky to be
18 supported by DCAS and the ability to work the supply
19 chain. We since transitioned just to custodians to
20 get exactly what that school needs in that time and
21 space.

22 So, the principal and the Chancellor will know.
23 The principal's the first conversation, the last
24 conversation with the custodian right. And so,
25 making sure custodians knew exactly what they needed

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2 talking about the burn rate and making sure they have
3 everything they need. And in a moments notice, we
4 could send nights or weekends from a borough, places
5 if there's a shortage. But right now, we're ready to
6 go and a 30-day supply of all PPE.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: I mean, respectfully,
8 one million sounds like a lot but that's like you
9 know a day.

10 KEVIN MORAN: That's like my junk door. Every
11 school has their 30-day supply.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: I hope they're not
13 junk. Uhm, but you see the concern and again, this
14 gets to what I mentioned earlier with Chair Treyger.
15 He was sharing pictures of my friends, my colleagues,
16 our teachers, our children's teachers, pictures on
17 Twitter. This is my PPE for the week and it was a
18 couple masks and a couple gloves the entire week.
19 They didn't get any the next week. And I, you know,
20 I want to make sure that if any child or adult needs
21 a mask, that it is there. It's available and again,
22 one million sounds like a lot but it's you know, not.

23 KEVIN MORAN: Yeah, our stock and supply is
24 maintained at the school building level. So, each
25 school, all 1,400 buildings are fully stocked. I

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2 have one million just in case if there is any issues.
3 And then there is out in the boroughs too. And the
4 Council Members knows, if he could send me
5 escalations, if you see escalations, we're happy to
6 talk to the district leadership and the principal to
7 make sure they have what they need. If there is any
8 supply interruption.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: So, a theme I'm hearing
10 and I want to make sure I am getting this right is
11 that, if a school reaches out to you, you give them
12 what they need?

13 MEISHA PORTER: Yes, and I will say, we are in
14 contact with the custodians, the facilities teams,
15 the principals are in communication with those
16 people. They know where to get the resources when
17 needed and to your point of the last year, we don't
18 want any teacher, we don't want any principal, we
19 don't want any family, any student to be deterred by
20 what we consider a minor experience for us. And that
21 is to supply and ensure that every school has a 30-
22 day supply of PPE every single day. We don't want
23 that to get in the way.

24 And so, we have PPE in abundance and our
25 principals and our custodians; to Chair Treyger's

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2 point about another thing on principals. Principals
3 don't have to worry about this. They just have to
4 say to their custodian, we need it and they got it.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: I don't want children
6 to be deter to families either but just a few more
7 questions. Uhm, one is about attendance.

8 MEISHA PORTER: Yes.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Uhm, I think it makes a
10 lot of sense to encourage students to stay home or
11 encourage families to keep their children when they
12 are not feeling well. That is the safest, smartest
13 thing to do. But with that, are you still judging
14 schools and children based on their attendance? And
15 the reason I'm asking this is because you have two
16 different incentives. The more important incentive
17 is to keep us all safe and alive. But the one that
18 follows you to college and the one that the school
19 receives on their quality review on the website, when
20 the Chancellor or the Executive Superintendent comes
21 into a school and looks at the bulletin board, they
22 see attendance data. So, you have conflicting
23 incentives and I'm wondering if you've addressed that
24 with schools and with families?

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2 MEISHA PORTER: You know we're in a different
3 place than we were two years ago. We had to address
4 that last year.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: I'm sorry, you had
6 what?

7 MEISHA PORTER: We are in a different place than
8 we were two years ago. When to your point, right,
9 like that 90 percent attendance, this is the
10 priority. We recognize that the most important thing
11 that we need to do in this moment is keep our
12 families and our communities safe. And so, we want
13 if our children feel sick, that they stay at home.
14 To your point, that is the best measure. However, we
15 also want them to be in school. We will not be
16 penalizing students. We will not be penalizing
17 schools. I'm going to ask Deputy Chancellor LaShawn
18 Robinson to talk about the attendance policies and
19 procedures and the way we code attendance differently
20 in this moment so we can account for and absence
21 that's connected to a COVID related potential
22 illness.

23 LASHAWN ROBINSON: Thank you so much Chancellor
24 and thank you for that question Council Member. We
25 are leading with support this year in all areas. As

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2 the Chancellor said, the most important
3 responsibility that we have is the health and safety
4 of our children and school communities and policy is
5 aligned with that.

6 So, when young people have to stay home due to
7 the health screener that you know students and
8 families and all members of the school community are
9 expected to do every morning, that information will
10 be updated in our I-Log system. We'll make a
11 notation and we'll support that young person
12 academically to ensure that if they can, they can
13 stay on track and if not, when they return, we'll
14 make sure that they have the supports that they need.

15 So, the lead for us is health and safety, policy
16 follows and we'll make a notation in our I-Log system
17 and provide that young person with the support that
18 they need to be successful.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: So, I don't mean to
20 interrupt. I just want to you know respect
21 everyone's time. Who is we? In other words, when a
22 student is home, is it up to that students teacher to
23 additionally provide remote instruction or is there
24 some sort of uhm, I don't want to say central,
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2 central support but who is providing support to that
3 child who is encouraged to stay home?

4 LASHAWN ROBINSON: Our school communities have
5 done tremendous work over the last 18 months, over
6 the summer and we know that they will as we
7 transition into this new school year. So, all of us,
8 we're all on the same page. When I say we, I mean
9 the collective we, the New York City Department of
10 Education but certainly at the school level with the
11 principal, the teacher in the classroom, making sure
12 that the young person receives what he or she may
13 need to be successful.

14 So, all of our systems are aligned toward that
15 effort. We are one team working collaboratively. We
16 have supports through superintendents, at the DCO
17 level with our Executive Superintendents. All of us
18 collectively. We recognize the magnitude of this
19 moment and we recognize that we're leading with
20 health and safety and healing while also making sure
21 that our young people can receive the academic
22 support that they need at this time as well.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: So, does that include
24 additional staff for an individual - I mean, I'm very
25 concerned about what it means for a school. You've

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heard again the Chair say a lot of principals are overburdened and I can tell you teachers are – I was too. Are there additional staff provided for that support?

MEISHA PORTER: And I'll ask Deputy Chief Academic Officer Linda Chen to come and join me. So, we know like Deputy Chancellor Robinson said, uhm, we have to lead with support. And we also know that you know they are going to be some more days out. Typical because we're asking families to keep their children home when they are sick. And so, but we also know and you and I know teacher to teacher, that we are going to make sure that our students have what they need so that they can either get back on track or remain on track during that time that they are off. We have resources both centrally and locally to do that. We have tons of lessons that are available online that we can provide to students. Teachers will prepare individualized you know learning packages for students while they are out.

And so, we know we know that all of those happened but to Deputy Chancellor Robinson's point, we need to make sure that we're also supporting schools and supporting teachers by providing access

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2 to resources, so teachers don't have to create things
3 for students to do while they are doing the thing we
4 need them to do and that is help keep our communities
5 safe.

6 LINDA CHEN: Thank you Chancellor and thank you
7 Councilman for the question and the concern about our
8 students and their learning when they are not able to
9 come to school. First of all, as the Chancellor
10 mentioned earlier, we do have a plan in the event of
11 quarantine for our students. In addition, I wanted
12 to speak specifically about the resources that she
13 referenced. We know that our schools are also hiring
14 as many staff as possible. And with that, we are
15 centrally providing resources as we have in the last
16 year.

17 For instance, we have In Teach Hub. Lessons
18 every day K-12 for all subject areas. Where teachers
19 or substitute teachers can access lessons. In
20 addition with the partnership with the UFT, we also
21 have teachers who last year who were very developed
22 in their craft with online teaching who have recorded
23 lessons that accompany a number of those lessons that
24 are available as well.

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2 As the Chancellor said, we want to make sure that
3 not only when it comes to PPE and health and safety
4 factors but also academically that our teachers have
5 the resources they need to serve the students
6 wherever they are.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Thank you. I'll just
8 ask two more because I know I'm going over time but
9 back to Council Member Grodenchik's question about
10 the busing. For younger children and this especially
11 impacts our younger children and children with
12 special needs of course. A class is quarantined if
13 there are a certain number of cases. Your website
14 says uhm, uh, elementary school, a positive class in
15 a classroom, all students quarantine. Does that
16 apply to if a child takes a bus? What's the process
17 if a child takes a bus and as he said, is in a long
18 metal tube and is positive. What's the quarantine
19 situation there?

20 KEVIN MORAN: Yeah, excellent question. As with
21 last year, the school bus is an extension of the
22 school and is treated as a classroom. And so, those
23 close contacts that quarantine, we contact through
24 the night. We do what we need to do to make sure
25 that students and staff are protected.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Thank you and my last
3 question is, your disease detectives, uh, good name.
4 How long does an investigation take and is there a
5 mechanism if it takes a certain number of hours or
6 days for automatically closing a school just in case.
7 I imagine a situ- well, go ahead.

8 DAVE CHOKSHI: Certainly, uhm, yes, our disease
9 detectives have been working around the clock. Not
10 just with respect to supporting schools but all of
11 the environments in New York City. I'm so grateful
12 to them for their expertise and for their diligence,
13 which has saved lives over the last 18 months.

14 With respect to your question, usually an
15 investigation takes you know at least a day and can
16 take days. We certainly try to do this as
17 expeditiously as possible because of what's on the
18 line with respect to making a determination. Uhm,
19 and to the Chair's question from earlier, ensuring
20 that communication happens as quickly as it can. It
21 does take time to do these rigorously and you know
22 because it is a momentous decision of course, if
23 there is an indication that there is widespread
24 transmission and a school needs to be closed. So,
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1
2 that has to be done in an epidemiologically sound
3 way.

4 So, that's the general timeframe. It very quiet
5 a bit from specific circumstance to circumstance
6 depending on the size of the school, the number of
7 cases, uhm, you know, whether it was multiple spaces
8 or cohorts effected or not and those are all things
9 that we deploy a team to collect information on as
10 quickly as we possibly can.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: So, it just, these were
12 issues we solved last year. The feeling, any teacher
13 or parent, when feeling of hurry up and wait and I
14 appreciate the immense amount of work that's done by
15 these detectives but if it takes longer than a day,
16 imagine being a parent or a teacher knowing there are
17 multiple cases in your school where you work, where
18 you send your child. And knowing that that disease
19 could be spreading and spreading while these
20 detective conduct the investigation.

21 So, you are saying there is no mechanism to
22 automatically close a school, just in case. That
23 doesn't exist?

24 DAVE CHOKSHI: Well, thank you for the
25 opportunity to clarify. I should say, if there is a

1
2 case, then close contact and you know if it involves
3 a classroom for example, at the elementary school
4 level, those can happen very quickly. As soon as the
5 case is confirmed, uhm, it's transmitted to the
6 situation room and that you know, that feedback loop
7 occurs quickly and certainly more quickly in recent
8 months, given the experience and the iteration you
9 know that we've been able to bring to our protocols
10 through the situation room.

11 It's when we're talking about that more detailed
12 level of investigation. Where again, there is a
13 determination about whether or not there is
14 widespread transmission in the school. Then it does
15 take some extra time beyond that. So, I want to
16 assuage at least part of the concern, which is you
17 know for exposures that have happened it may be the
18 case that a classroom is already quarantining and
19 then the further determination is whether that needs
20 to extend to the full school or not.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: I don't think it quite,
22 respectfully, don't think it quite answers the
23 question but I will, you know -

24 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Well, just to clarify
25 Commissioner because if a member of the school staff

1
2 who let's say is vaccinate finds out that they tested
3 positive for the virus because I think you have
4 agreed that there have been break through cases, is
5 that correct?

6 DAVE CHOKSHI: Yes.

7 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Is that member of the
8 school staff required to tell the principal that they
9 have tested positive? Does anyone know that?

10 DAVE CHOKSHI: Yes, they are.

11 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Okay and let's say that
12 information does not trickle up to the administrator,
13 does the situation room get an alert that a member of
14 the school staff tested positive somewhere and is
15 integral to the school because last school year,
16 folks what led to a number of closures, was not just
17 about kids testing positive, it was staff. Because
18 that also counts into the count last year. Uh, if
19 someone does not notify the principal that they
20 tested positive, does that information still trickle
21 up to the situation room? Or can anyone speak to
22 that?

23 DAVE CHOKSHI: Well, what I can say is there are
24 multiple modes of communication to get that
25 information about positive cases with respect to the

1
2 specifics of this, I may have to defer to my
3 colleagues.

4 KEVIN MORAN: All students are encouraged to
5 inform the principal of a COVID diagnosis.

6 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: You said encouraged.

7 KEVIN MORAN: Yes and so, you know the fact – I
8 think you're talking at a potentially innocent
9 question but if somebody gets COVID and has a
10 diagnosis and refuses to notify the administration.
11 I think that's a whole different topic all together,
12 I don't know how to answer that one.

13 MEISHA PORTER: I would just add, we are still
14 engaging in our health screening protocol and through
15 the health screening protocol, a staff member would
16 have to identify and that would warrant them to not
17 be in the building. And so, I think it's important
18 to note that that's still a part of our layered
19 approach to health and safety in our buildings.

20 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Okay. Thanks for the
21 additional information.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Yes, I just want to
23 thank all of you. I know you are all working very
24 hard. I look forward to working with all of you to
25 make sure our kids, our families, our professionals

1
2 are safe and I encourage you to please, you know
3 again, a huge issue that I am consistently seeing and
4 I saw throughout these 18 months is communication,
5 honest communication. And I think that that goes a
6 long way uhm, in underlying any fears that the people
7 may have and do have about returning to school.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Next, we'll hear from Council
9 Member Ampry-Samuel followed by Council Members
10 Borelli, Riley, Gennaro and Miller. Council Member
11 Ampry-Samuel?

12 COUNCIL MEMBER AMPRY-SAMUEL: Good afternoon
13 everyone. I just have a few quick follow-up
14 questions just for point of clarification. In
15 reference to the school buses, uhm, do you ensure
16 that the buses are practicing healthy spacing and
17 just you know, three feet, six feet between the
18 children on the buses?

19 MEISHA PORTER: So, I'll let Kevin Moran talk
20 about our busing protocols.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER AMPRY-SAMUEL: Okay, next, uhm,
22 the nurses that are in the schools, are they all the
23 new nurses are they all DOE nurses or are some of
24 them from agencies or different things?

1
2 MEISHA PORTER: We'll start with the busing and
3 then go from there.

4 KEVIN MORAN: As it relates to school busing, we
5 are following CDC guidance and having three feet on
6 buses where possible. And there will be instances
7 where that's not possible.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER AMPRY-SAMUEL: And when it's not
9 possible?

10 KEVIN MORAN: We're using - so, when I started
11 off earlier on the school buses, we are using and
12 have the access to and have provided to the companies
13 enhance PPE, deep cleaning disinfection
14 opportunities. And so, everyone is required to wear
15 a mask. Buses will leave the roof hatches open for
16 ventilation. Will leave the windows open and will
17 leave the system on not recirculating so that the air
18 is not recirculated in the cabin.

19 So, for the duration of the ride, they are
20 required to wear a mask. For those that want
21 enhanced PPE, we can provide that and that's
22 inclusive of face shields, KN95 masks, surgical
23 gloves, hand sanitizer and wipes. And so, those are
24 available. To the extent possible, we want everyone
25 social distancing on busing.

1
2 LASHAWN ROBINSON: Thank you Chancellor and thank
3 you Council Member for that question regarding
4 nurses. Within our school system, we have Department
5 of Education nurses, uhm, DOH Department of Health
6 nurses. We also have a partnership with H&H Health
7 and Hospitals who provide nurses for us along with
8 agency nurses.

9 In each school, we will have a highly qualified
10 trained nurse in DOE systems within our school
11 buildings just like last year.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER AMPRY-SAMUEL: Okay and my last
13 question is just going back to the vaccinations. So,
14 what are the current consequences or penalties for
15 noncompliance? And this is specifically talking
16 about the teachers and DOE staff in the school. And
17 also, is the administration prepared to fill
18 positions left vacant as a result of the mandate in
19 the "noncompliance"?

20 MEISHA PORTER: Thank you for that really
21 important question and it's our expectation that all
22 of our faculty members will comply. The city is
23 currently in impact bargaining to discuss with the
24 unions the consequences of faculty members who don't
25 comply. Uhm, we have you know as a result of the

1
2 pandemic a mass, an extensive sub pool that we expect
3 can support our schools. But you know our hope is
4 that our teachers, our faculty members, will do what
5 they continue to do throughout this pandemic and for
6 our students by getting vaccinated and creating a
7 level of safety and protection around them.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER AMPRY-SAMUEL: And for those that
9 don't?

10 MEISHA PORTER: For those that don't -

11 COUNCIL MEMBER AMPRY-SAMUEL: I notice that
12 you're in the middle of a bargaining but in the event
13 this like you know takes it to court and is extended
14 out and it's a long process, what are you doing in
15 the interim?

16 MEISHA PORTER: In the interim, we are currently
17 in impact bargaining and expect that our mandate will
18 require that the vaccination, that one dose be
19 completed by September 27th.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER AMPRY-SAMUEL: Thank you.

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Next, we'll hear from Council
22 Member Borelli.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: Uh, thank you. I
24 appreciate it. Dr. Chokshi, were you involved in
25 informing the city's key to the city policy?

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DAVE CHOKSHI: Yes, I was.

COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: I'd like to read something into the record from a document that the city's providing businesses into the public on the key to the city issued August 17th. Entitled Guidance for Customers and Employee on Equitable Implementation of the Key to the City.

Page one, Section three reads, as an employee you have the right to a reasonable accommodation to enable you to perform your job. If you are unable to show proof of vaccination because of a disability, pregnancy, religious belief or your status as a victim of domestic violence, stalking or sex offenses. It goes on to page three. If you are seeking a reasonable accommodation because of a medical condition or due to a pregnancy, your employer can request a note from a medical provider supporting your inability to show proof of vaccination.

So, the question is, this is a document from the Administration. So, is the Administration right when they say employers must provide reasonable accommodation for disability, pregnancy, religious belief or your status as a victim of domestic

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2 violence, stalking or sex offenses or are they right
3 when as the Chancellor indicate employees wont be
4 given exemptions and they are to be terminated or
5 whatever the consequences.

6 DAVE CHOKSHI: Well, what I would say Council
7 Member is that the key to NYC and the vaccine
8 requirement for Department of Education staff are two
9 different programs. They do have different
10 specifications but both of them do have a common goal
11 which is, the health, safety and protection of New
12 Yorkers.

13 MEISHA PORTER: And we can speak to your
14 question. Lauren Siciliano can speak to that
15 question.

16 LAUREN SICILIANO: Absolutely, thank you for the
17 question. Just specially in terms of DOE, uhm, I
18 think that the language that you saw in that document
19 refers to a range of federal, state and local laws
20 around reasonable accommodations and we are as the
21 Chancellor said working closely with our union
22 partners and our city health partners to understand
23 the parameters for those types of accommodations.
24 But that language references general legal
25 requirements around -

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: So, just to clarify, did
3 you say you're considering what accommodations that
4 have been made?

5 LAUREN SICILIANO: We are, as part of the impact
6 bargaining that the Chancellor described, we're
7 working with our labor partners and city health
8 partners to understand the parameters for those.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: Okay, so, just for the
10 record, the DOE is considering exemptions to make for
11 certain employees for reasons listed in the city's
12 other documents that I read?

13 LAUREN SICILIANO: Those refer to local, state
14 and federal laws that DOE is also required to follow.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: Why – so the governor,
16 the last governor, uhm, indicated that schools were
17 much safer than so many other different environments
18 and I think Chancellor, you said that as well and I
19 agree with you. So, why was it safe to provide those
20 exemptions to establishments that are under the
21 license of New York City and not for the DOE? I
22 mean, that's my question but if you are saying you're
23 considering that, I mean, I guess why wasn't that
24 made clear?

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2 LAUREN SICILIANO: So, uhm, the uhm, I don't have
3 the specific language that you're looking at but what
4 it sounds like is that it's referring to a general
5 suite of laws that uh, employers like DOE are also
6 required to follow in terms of instances in which
7 reasonable accommodations –

8 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: So, do we know yet what
9 will happen to a teacher who is not vaccinated on
10 September 28th? No. So, just to give like a real
11 world hypothetical. A teacher who is pregnant uhm,
12 with a note from her doctor claiming you know it's
13 not in her medical interest. Frankly, I don't think
14 it's your information. You need to know the
15 information of why the doctor thinks that but the
16 doctor is saying it's not in this particular persons
17 interest to have the vaccine. That person will be
18 fired uhm, by the DOE potentially.

19 DAVE CHOKSHI: If I may start on the medical part
20 of it Chancellor.

21 MEISHA PORTER: Yeah, go ahead, hmm, hmm.

22 DAVE CHOKSHI: First, I just want to make clear
23 Council Member that we have a strong recommendation
24 that people who are pregnant do get vaccinated. In
25 fact, the CDC recently strengthened its

1
2 recommendation about the benefits far outweighing the
3 risks for vaccination for people who are pregnant.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: But you said the risk.
5 So, is the risk level zero for the vaccine? Not
6 statistically zero, not almost zero, is the risk
7 level zero?

8 DAVE CHOKSHI: The benefits far outweigh the
9 risk.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: But the risk level is
11 not zero. I know you don't want to say it. I don't
12 blame you. It will probably cause a fire storm but
13 you know to be clear, the risk level is not zero.

14 DAVE CHOKSHI: Council Member, as a doctor, what
15 I would say is that uhm, all medications, therapies,
16 vaccines, they have some risk associated with them.
17 But our job is to be very clear about the magnitude
18 to which the benefits outweigh the risks. And with
19 respect to the authorized COVID-19 vaccines, the
20 science and the evidence is very, very clear that the
21 benefits far outweigh the risks. This is both in
22 terms of it being a personal defense against disease,
23 as well as a community defense against the spread of
24 COVID-19.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: I agree with you 100
3 percent. I think people should get vaccinated. I
4 think the benefits do far outweigh the costs. That's
5 your job to tell us that and I think you've done a
6 great job. It's our job to weigh the risk tolerance
7 and the level of intrusion government will make.
8 That's what a legislature does. But regardless.

9 [AUDIENCE APPLAUDING]

10 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Folks, folks, folks.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: But hear me out. I
12 think you should all get your vaccines.

13 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: There are ways of
14 expressing - folks please. This is the Council
15 Members time, please. Thank you. Yes, Council
16 Member.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: So, uhm, just to go
18 back, just to go back to another question I guess.
19 What happens to the classroom again if a teacher is
20 terminated or placed on unpaid leave or whatever the
21 consequence is. You mentioned the substitute
22 teachers who would be implemented. Is it better for
23 a student to have their continued qualified licensed
24 teacher or an assortment of subs who may lack those
25 qualifications and licenses?

1
2 MEISHA PORTER: I think it's important to note
3 that we're in the middle of a public health crisis.
4 And so, it's better [AUDIENCE MAKING NOISE 2:41:38].

5 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Folks, again, please have
6 respect for the peoples house.

7 [AUDIENCE MAKING NOISE 2:41:46]

8 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: This is a City Council
9 hearing. The Chancellor and Health Commissioner are
10 here answering questions for families on the record
11 and folks, please. Again, another outburst and I'm
12 going to ask Sergeant at Arms to clear the room.
13 This is really important for folks to hear.

14 Chancellor, my apologies, please continue.

15 MEISHA PORTER: Thank you. So, as I said, I
16 think it's important to note that we are in a public
17 health moment. That we have to you know, I agree
18 with you that it is more important to have a
19 certified vaccinated teacher in the classroom with
20 his or her class teaching those students. However,
21 when we have to weigh health and safety along with
22 our academic requirements to students, we have to
23 keep them healthy and safe so that they can learn.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: How many cases in New
25 York City public schools last year while school was

1
2 in session were found to have transmission from a
3 student to a teacher or a paraprofessional?

4 MEISHA PORTER: So, the, the, I'd have to - I
5 don't have that number with me but the greater
6 instances were around adult transmission.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: Okay, but I'm just
8 trying to establish. We don't - that's a number the
9 city has or that's a number we don't have?

10 DAVE CHOKSHI: Council Member, we can follow-up
11 on that to see if we have specific data in the way
12 that your describing. What I can tell you is uhm,
13 the city published a peer reviewed scientific article
14 on at least a portion of the last full school year,
15 which showed that 78 percent of cases of transmission
16 that occurred within the school building were from
17 adults. Either adult to adult or adult to children,
18 so that means the balance was 22 percent.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: So, the estimate is 22
20 percent. Okay, that's fine. But we do have a hard
21 number of how many diagnosed cases were from
22 transmission in school regardless of who the initial
23 unhealthy person was?

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DAVE CHOKSHI: We do have an estimate of that.

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In some cases, it is difficult to ascertain precisely

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what the source of transmission is.

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COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: But it's - we have the

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estimate and the estimate we're confident is worth it

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than to terminate or fire people based on it? In

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other words it was so high, that we've decided that

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it's worth firing the same people that we've asked to

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do tremendous you know Yeoman's work and God's work

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last year during the pandemic. So, that numbers high

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enough to justify their potential termination? It's

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a policy question but we're policy makers, that's

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what I'm asking.

15

DAVE CHOKSHI: Chancellor, I'll start and then

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hand it over to you.

17

MEISHA PORTER: Yeah, hmm, hmm.

18

DAVE CHOKSHI: I want to be very clear that you

19

know the goal of the Commissioner's order that I

20

made, which is to require school staff to be

21

vaccinated is for health, safety and protection. Our

22

aim is to get all of those school staff vaccinated.

23

To protect themselves as well as to protect their

24

families and the school community.

25

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: Uhm, I guess my final
3 question. There is 50 states. Dozens of large
4 cities, dozens of countries with similar health
5 departments and capabilities that resemble our own.
6 And I'm assuming the leadership is all as qualified
7 as you both Commissioner and Chancellor and I don't
8 doubt you're qualified and I commend you in so many
9 ways for the work you've done.

10 But with all that stuff and everyone digesting
11 the same corpus of scientific research and data,
12 there's still countless different ways people have
13 structured their approach to COVID-19 and their
14 response. Do you think politics plays a role in
15 those choices?

16 MEISHA PORTER: What we're doing is opening a
17 school system so that we can get our children in the
18 places in which they learn best. And I'm not
19 engaging in a moment of politics. I'm engaging in
20 what I believe is important for children as a
21 teacher, as a school leader and as the leader of the
22 largest school system in the country.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: I mean, just given the
24 fact that we have the state health commissioner now
25 you know dumping on the last governor for not being

1
2 transparent in health policy at the state level, are
3 you suggesting that it's an unfair question to ask
4 whether there is politics always at play in health
5 policy?

6 MEISHA PORTER: I'm suggesting that Dr. Chokshi
7 and I have been working to open schools and what
8 we've done is really look at all of the science
9 around how to do that safely and so, what I'm
10 suggesting is, that's what I'm prioritizing and
11 focusing on.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: Thank you guys and as a
13 parent, I do, I do wish you luck and I, frankly, I
14 hope you're right. I hope you're right and I'm wrong
15 but thank you very much.

16 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Council Member and
17 next, we'll hear from Council Member Riley.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Thank you Council. How
19 are you doing Commissioner? How are you doing
20 Chancellor? Thank you so much Chairs. Uhm, I think
21 everything has been asked today but I'm going to
22 emphasize with my colleagues that this year is
23 predicted to be one of the coldest and longest
24 winters. As we're going back to school, we do
25 understand our classrooms are over populated. We are

1
2 trying everything in our measure right now to lower
3 the amount of children within the classrooms. But
4 being that this is going to be a very cold and long
5 winter and we do not have a remote option available
6 for our students, is this something that should be
7 alarming? Is there anything that we're going to do
8 to protect our students moving forward? Being that
9 this will be a very devastating winter and we don't
10 know if another variant may come alive after this
11 winter.

12 MEISHA PORTER: So, I'll start and then you'll
13 talk about variants. I think it's important to note
14 that we're not offering a remote option. It doesn't
15 mean we aren't prepared to go remote if we need to.
16 And so, we have, New York City has continued, you all
17 have been doing this work since before I sat in this
18 seat when I was sitting in the Bronx. Uhm, what
19 we're prepared to do is to make sure that learning
20 continues. And if the cases rise and we have to go
21 remote, we're prepared to do that. We've learned so
22 much in the pandemic around what we can do. That's
23 why we're making sure that our students continue to
24 have access to devices. Devices that are Wi-Fi LTE
25 enabled, so that they can remain connected to school.

1
2 You know, we are definitely leaning into getting
3 ready to open but we are prepared to pivot should we
4 need to.

5 DAVE CHOKSHI: Thank you and I'll just add
6 Council Member. Thank you for the question. We do
7 know that respiratory viruses are more likely to
8 spread in the winter months. It's a combination of
9 the cold driving more people inside as well as
10 changes in the relative humidity of the year that
11 allows for the virus to spread more easily. And so,
12 we have to bring to bear this layered approach to
13 prevention that you've heard us talk about.

14 But there is one very, very important tool, which
15 I have to reemphasize and that's the COVID-19
16 vaccines. Which we did not have at this time last
17 year heading into the winter. We have made very good
18 strides in our vaccination campaign in New York City
19 with over 10.7 million doses administered. 77
20 percent of adults with at least one dose and as you
21 heard me say earlier, 62 percent of kids between 12
22 and 17 with at least one dose.

23 We are going to push those numbers even higher
24 and it is the most critically important thing we can
25

1
2 do to keep one another safe. And most importantly,
3 keep our kids safe heading into the winter.

4 So, my plea, you know what I urge all of us to
5 think about is this is – if it's not enough to
6 protect yourself or to protect your loved ones, this
7 is something that we have to do for our community and
8 our city, especially heading into the winter months.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Thank you Commissioner and
10 just one more question. Myself and Public Advocate
11 Williams and the Healing Center Taskforce put
12 together some recommendations that we did present to
13 the DOE. So, my question is, did you receive the
14 recommendations from the taskforce? Have you given
15 any of the recommendations any thoughts? And is
16 there room for further discussion? Because I have
17 been having meetings with other organizations that
18 had some issues with some of the taskforce
19 recommendations but we would like to sit down with
20 you and discuss how we could better suit our student
21 who went through a lot of traumatic situations during
22 this pandemic.

23 MEISHA PORTER: Thank you so much Council Member
24 Riley and thank you for your work and your efforts.
25 We have received the recommendations. We are

1
2 reviewing them and we are absolutely open to sitting
3 down and thinking about how we implement some of the
4 recommendations in our schools.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Council Member
6 Riley. Can we hand the mic to Council Member Miller
7 now?

8 COUNCIL MEMBER MILLER: Thank you sir. Good
9 afternoon Madam Chancellor, team DOE Dr. Chokshi.
10 Thank you so much for being here. Chairs Treyger and
11 Levine, thank you so much for your leadership this
12 afternoon.

13 In terms of the situation room, often times last
14 year I'm finding from principals, administrators and
15 the school community that they were just often
16 unprepared and not necessarily had the tools and
17 resources to – my mother calls every time – and I'm
18 in trouble if I don't pick it up but I'm going to eat
19 this one okay. Uhm, and so, I want to begin with you
20 said that there would be additional situation room
21 staff. Will that staff as well as the addition staff
22 be retrained, be trained and retrained in the new
23 policies considering that uhm, often times over the
24 past year, that uh, administrators are waiting until
25 10-11 o'clock at night to decide what they are going

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2 to do the next day and not be able to inform the
3 school community as to what next steps were going to
4 be in a timely fashion. How do we propose to address
5 that situation?

6 KEVIN MORAN: Yes, thank you for the question and
7 I'm thankful to the leadership of Commissioner La
8 Rocca as we staff up. You know, I had mentioned
9 earlier, I think the key is not just adding the 84
10 additional staff members to the situation room. But
11 actually working alongside multiple agencies that
12 have done this before. We were learning last year as
13 we stood up the situation room at what worked best
14 for schools. What were those conflicting timelines?
15 What were the things that we needed to account for as
16 our agency and those interdependencies between the
17 Health Department, between Test and Traces they
18 ramped up and the disease detectives did their work.

19 So, there's a lot to the communication path but I
20 think we gained a lot of efficiency and we've been
21 training on these new protocols that are posted to
22 make sure our schools get the right real time advice
23 and the policy, so that the - on the receiving end
24 they are getting the most current information on the
25 guidance that we have.

1
2 So, yes, that training will happen and as we
3 onboard folks, we're real excited to teach them where
4 we've been and where we're headed.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER MILLER: Okay that continuity is
6 important and I was saying that what we were hearing
7 and my colleagues and I that it wasn't a lot of as a
8 matter of fact information. Here it is and uhm,
9 principals were kind of working in a very [INAUDIBLE
10 2:53:55] kind of way.

11 If a member of the staff tests positive and they
12 are vaccinated, will they be allowed back into the
13 school building and when?

14 MEISHA PORTER: Yeah, so if a vaccinated staff
15 member tests positive, they will be allowed as long
16 as they are asymptomatic.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER MILLER: Dr. Chokshi, do you care
18 to chime in on that?

19 DAVE CHOKSHI: I'm sorry, I may have to clarify
20 that. I believe the Chancellor is thinking about a
21 case in which there is an exposure for a fully
22 vaccinated person. In which case, as long as they
23 are asymptomatic, they would still be in the school
24 building but in the case that you're laying out. If
25 they have a positive test then they do have to

1
2 complete their isolation period and they would not be
3 allowed in the school building.

4 MEISHA PORTER: Yes, thank you Dr. Chokshi.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER MILLER: Okay, thank you and uhm,
6 uh, as a matter of return to school policy. There is
7 Chancellor, the - your administration put out a lot
8 of information and administrators are fielding
9 questions from parents about after school programs.

10 MEISHA PORTER: Yes, hmm, hmm.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER MILLER: Saturday programs and so
12 forth. We haven't had an opportunity to really have
13 any discourse about that but certainly it's going to
14 impact parents and student participation. Could you
15 expand on that?

16 MEISHA PORTER: So, you know we know that part of
17 the return to school is not just about what we do
18 from 8-3 but it's about the additional academic and
19 enrichment programs that we offer. And so, we're
20 looking forward to offering those as well but we also
21 you know have to lean into health and safety
22 protocols. So, we're working through what that
23 means, what that looks like. How do we offer them
24 safely? How do make sure again, we continue to
25 protect our students? What activities maybe high

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2 risk? What activities we may want to lesson and so
3 again, we know that enrichment and after school
4 activities are an important part of our come back and
5 we look forward to offering them but we're also
6 looking at how we offer them safely.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER MILLER: Okay, do we have a
8 timeline on any of these programs?

9 MEISHA PORTER: Yeah, we expect to and I will let
10 Deputy Chancellor Robinson talk about some of our
11 community schools programs. We expect to start
12 offering them you know as part of our come back. But
13 we again, want to lean into looking at what
14 activities we're offering. You know, how we offer
15 them safely. What the timeliness is and also,
16 ensuring that we are creating time to make sure our
17 buildings are cleaned and turned around for the next
18 school day.

19 LASHAWN ROBINSON: Thank you Chancellor. Thank
20 you Council Member. Uhm, I know there's a lot going
21 on right now but I'm happy to report that PSAL is
22 back. We have our student athletes back. We see
23 that as an important part of the mental health and
24 wellness and keeping our young people physically
25 active and healthy.

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2 So, they are back already. We'll have
3 competitions beginning as early as the first week of
4 school and for our high risk sports, we listen to the
5 state and other health professionals and we are
6 ensuring that for our high risk sports, our athletes
7 have the vaccine.

8 Our other programming will be coming back online.
9 We will have more information about that very shortly
10 with our community schools but also our other after
11 school programs. But we've seen it through Summer
12 Rising. Highly successful. Our partnerships with
13 our CBO's and keeping our young people active and
14 engaged in extracurricular activities. The arts and
15 other kinds of programming. So, we're excited about
16 that. It's very much a part of our homecoming and
17 very much a part of how we view health and safety
18 from a mental health and wellness lens and also,
19 keeping our young people physically fit and active
20 while supporting parents and ensuring that we have
21 that afterschool option available.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER MILLER: Okay, but very
23 specifically because you mentioned community schools.
24 Will all schools K-12 have afterschool programs
25 available to them?

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LASHAWN ROBINSON: For our community school partners, that is a part of the model and we can certainly follow-up for our community schools. This year, we increased the number of community schools in partnership with Council and the next school year, we're increasing that number yet again. So, you know hopefully I've heard you all call for every school becoming a community school. I would love to see that happen across New York City but some more to come there.

COUNCIL MEMBER MILLER: So, but that's not the expectations as of next week that schools won't -

LASHAWN ROBINSON: No, every school will not be a community school next week.

COUNCIL MEMBER MILLER: No, no, not a community school but have an after school program whether it is local CBO or through DOE, that will be available.

LASHAWN ROBINSON: We can certainly get you the information for all Council Members and make sure that families have that information as well. I don't want to speak to every single individual school but it is a part of our community school model and we are happy to get that information to Council.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER MILLER: But each middle school
3 will continue to have an after school program
4 correct?

5 LASHAWN ROBINSON: Yes, we still have those
6 programs in place.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER MILLER: Okay and I was
8 specifically asking about elementary. That's not yet
9 online.

10 MEISHA PORTER: But you know again we'll continue
11 to work with our elementary schools and we've
12 definitely been asked about offering and supporting
13 them and creating high quality after school
14 programming as well.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER MILLER: Thank you very much.
16 Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Uh, we have two more
18 Council Members left for questions. Remember there
19 is no round two. Also, just to note that I believe
20 the Health Commissioner has an important health call
21 at 1:30. So, if any members have a health question
22 now for the Health Commissioner, we should ask them
23 now. So, who is next on the queue? Council Member
24 Brooks-Powers please. Thank you.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: Thanks so much and
3 good afternoon and thank you Chair Treyger for uhm,
4 today's hearing and for your leadership on this very
5 important issue. Also, thanks so much to Chancellor
6 Porter and Commissioner Chokshi for your testimony
7 today. In the interest of the time, I'm going to
8 work to try and avoid any questions that seemingly
9 have been addressed. Uhm, while I'm not on the
10 Education Committee, I felt it important to travel
11 from Far Rockaway today to speak on behalf of the
12 constituents in the 31st Council District. I've been
13 having a number of conversations with community
14 leaders, education leaders from our principals to our
15 teachers, as well as parents that have some concerns.
16 So, I found a mixed bag and feedback, which include a
17 lot of parents and students being excited about the
18 reopening of our schools but having serious concerns
19 still and uhm, with hope that we can avoid, a not so
20 good reopening as we had last year. Which is going
21 to require a lot of communication and coordination.

22 And so, I'm really interested in understanding a
23 bit better what that all looks like. So, the first
24 question that I have is you know as schools across
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1
2 the country reopen, including here in New York City,
3 many are currently experiencing outbreaks.

4 And so, I'm interested in knowing if the
5 Department of Education as well as DHMH, excuse me
6 DOHMH conveyed plans and protocols to protect our
7 students, teachers and staff in the school system in
8 the event of an outbreak? Uhm, because some of the
9 feedback I'm hearing is that the education leaders do
10 not have a clear understanding in the event of an
11 outbreak or even with the reopening what that clear
12 plan is.

13 So, I'd like to know from your perspective, has
14 this been conveyed to the schools and what does that
15 look like?

16 MEISHA PORTER: Hmm, hmm. So, I'll start. You
17 know, so our school leaders are very much aware of
18 what we learned over the last year and because you're
19 talking specifically to outbreaks, we are in the
20 process of finalizing our closure protocols, our
21 quarantining protocols but in the event of an
22 outbreak that leads to a closure or a classroom
23 closure, we will pivot to a remote classroom or pivot
24 to a remote school. That's what we've learned how to
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2 do in the pandemic, that's what we will continue to
3 do.

4 What it also means though is that there will be
5 different levels of what that potentially looks like
6 right, in an elementary school classroom. How we
7 will engage our K-5 students. How we will engage our
8 6-12 students. What we can promise is that
9 instruction will continue for our students. We know
10 that that is so important in this moment and we've
11 learned so much in this pandemic about how we need to
12 do that.

13 And so, we will continue to provide support to
14 our schools and our school leaders around what needs
15 to happen but we also are continuing to work with our
16 union partners around the protocols that result in
17 those moves and what they look like.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you for
19 that. Uhm, I don't know, Commissioner, do you have
20 anything to add before I go to the next question?

21 DAVE CHOKSHI: The Chancellor described it well.
22 I'll just add very briefly. I'm sure Council Member,
23 you've seen the homecoming handbook, which outlines
24 you know some of the approaches, the protocols that
25 were described and what I would clarify is that -

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2 [AUDIENCE OUTBURST 3:03:36-3:03:43]

3 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Alright, listen, this,
4 this, this is - Sergeant please have her removed.
5 Please have her removed. Yeah. Folks, uh, Sergeant,
6 please have her removed. That is, listen folks, that
7 is incredibly disrespectful. That is incredibly
8 disrespectful. Sergeant, sergeant, sergeant, I'm
9 asking please, clear out the whole balcony. Please
10 clear out the whole balcony. Please, please clear
11 out, please clear out the balcony. Please clear out
12 the balcony, please clear out the balcony. Please
13 clear out the balcony.

14 You, you, folks, you do not have a right to
15 disrupt an important public hearing over and over
16 again. Sergeants, please have them removed. This is
17 unacceptable. This is -

18 COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: Excuse me, I'd
19 like to finish asking the question on behalf of my
20 constituency.

21 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Uh, Council Members, we're
22 going to have a three minute recess. [GAVEL]. We're
23 going to have a three minute recess. Sergeants,
24 please clear out the room. [GAVEL]. [DISRUPTION
25 FROM AUDIENCE 3:06:29-3:07:18].

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Ladies and gentleman, this
3 is a democratic institution it is not mob rule.
4 Okay. [DISRUPTION FROM AUDIENCE 3:07:26-3:08:47].

5 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Uh, just, again, we're
6 waiting for everyone to be cleared out. [3:08:47-
7 3:09:52]. Alright, we're going to have the Health
8 Commissioner say a few words before he has to depart
9 for a health call.

10 DAVE CHOKSHI: Uh, thank you so much. Council
11 Member, I just wanted to conclude my response to you
12 to round it out and say that it's not just in the
13 setting of an outbreak, it's in the identification of
14 even a single case. That's when the protocols begin
15 with respect to the coordination between a school and
16 the situation room and we have had the benefit as the
17 Chancellor was saying of the last year in terms of
18 refining exactly how that communication occurs and
19 we'll continue of course our Department of Education
20 colleagues leading in terms of communicating that to
21 schools and families.

22 So, uhm, and with that Chair, forgive me I do
23 have to leave for another call. I just very much
24 appreciate your having a hearing on this incredibly
25 important topic. Uhm, I'm grateful for the -

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2 [DISRUPTION 3:10:50-3:11:15]

3 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: This is unacceptable in
4 this institution. Unacceptable in this institution.
5 This is unacceptable. That language, unacceptable.
6 And let me tell you something, as a former civics
7 teacher, there is no constitutional right to spread
8 disease in this country. And quite frankly the
9 misinformation disease as well.

10 Health Commissioner Chokshi, thank you. Thank
11 you. Let's have them removed please.

12 Okay, we're just going to wrap up with the final
13 questions here. Please, just continue. Chancellor,
14 thank you for staying and your team. Our apologies
15 for this outrageous outburst. Please, continue
16 Council Member.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you Chair.
18 Uhm, also, I wanted to ask a question on behalf of
19 the parents that have children with disabilities in
20 the schools in terms of their, in some instances
21 inability to wear a mask throughout the day. Uhm,
22 how, I think they are concerned about how they keep
23 not only their kids safe but others safe because that
24 maybe a real dynamic for them as well.
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2 MEISHA PORTER: Yeah, thank you Council Member
3 for that important question and that question, which
4 is just like wrapped around not only keeping your
5 child safe but keeping the community safe. So, I'm
6 going to ask how Deputy Chief Academic Officer for
7 special needs students, Christina Foti to talk
8 specifically about what that looks like for us.

9 CHRISTINA FOTI: Of course Chancellor and thank
10 you Council Member, we are very throughout this
11 pandemic, we've been very aware of our students that
12 have limited mask tolerance for whatever reason.
13 Whether they are a student on the spectrum, uhm, or
14 they are a younger student. And so, we've been
15 training our folks to work with students on how to
16 develop mask tolerance in small increments at a time.

17 Additional PPE is also available for all the
18 staff members where there might be students in the
19 class that have limited mask tolerance, but the goal
20 is to develop that tolerance incrementally over time.
21 That's something that we have been working on and
22 we'll continue to work on and we recognize that the
23 additional health and safety protocols that need to
24 be in place in those classrooms and are working
25 diligently to ensure that folks are well protected.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you for
3 that. Also, in terms of uhm, sorry, just touching
4 back on the digital divide that I know that was
5 brought up earlier today. I'm really happy to hear
6 that DOE has ensured that they have enough devices
7 this year. Chancellor as you know being from Far
8 Rockaway with that digital divide is like in Far
9 Rockaway as well as South East Queens. It's
10 tremendous. And so, not only the students but also
11 the educators when they have to work from home. Uhm,
12 I just wanted to kind of underscore the importance of
13 having devices that are fully powered up with enough
14 strength. Because that was something that was
15 emphasized to me, the strength of the Wi-Fi is
16 necessary. So, not just simply having Wi-Fi access
17 to make sure that uhm, they have proper connectivity.

18 So, in terms of the devices that you have
19 secured, was that something taken into account in
20 terms of what type of equipment was purchased?

21 MEISHA PORTER: So, I'll let Lauren talk a little
22 bit about the types of equipment that were purchased
23 but I will tell you, we though a lot about that. We
24 thought about you know, we started with iPads what
25 were LTE enabled. We heard from schools and families

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2 and parents on the Chromebooks also worked really
3 well. And so, we wanted to make sure that we were
4 investing in the devices that were most useful for
5 our students and families. But also, gave them the
6 power and connectivity that they needed to do the
7 things that they need to do both in-person and
8 remotely. So, Lauren.

9 LAUREN SICILIANO: Absolutely, thank you
10 Chancellor and thank you for the question and for
11 your interest in this topic. Uhm, I would just add
12 in addition to making sure that we purchased all of
13 these LTE enabled devices, which means they come with
14 data plans. We also have hot spots available and as
15 we discussed a little bit before, we're working
16 extraordinarily close with schools to help them make
17 the right choices on devices as well for their school
18 community.

19 Just to give a quick example, one of the neat
20 things we were able to do this year, our
21 extraordinary IT team worked with schools that needed
22 the you know the iPads didn't have the processing
23 capacity for some of the applications that they
24 needed and so, they did a really neat thing that I
25 won't even attempt to articulate myself involving

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2 virtual machines that allowed them to use programs
3 that they otherwise wouldn't have been able to use a
4 device like that.

5 So, we're constantly trying to innovate as well
6 in making sure that schools have the devices that
7 they need based on their programs.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: Uhm, thank you for
9 that and I again want to underscore because one thing
10 that was shared and communicated to me was that in
11 some communities, they have more limited resources.
12 So, even when COVID first hit and we had to
13 transition to remote learning, there was a
14 significant gap in the ability for certain schools to
15 pivot to remote learning.

16 So, having had that experience and now going uhm
17 into almost I guess the second year of this, we want
18 to make sure that we are being preemptive on this and
19 I just have three really quick last questions.

20 Uhm, so, another thing in terms of the virtual
21 learning option. I know that you mentioned for those
22 who had medical reasons but for the parents who may
23 not have a medical reason but in terms of what their
24 comfort is for their children. Is there still time
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2 to explore having the ability for that remote
3 learning experience for their children?

4 MEISHA PORTER: At this time, we don't have that
5 option but what we want to do is to open up our
6 school communities, invite families in, and build
7 that bridge to feeling safe and comfortable to come
8 back to school. I understand the anxiety. I
9 understand the concern and we want to open our
10 buildings and really work together with families to
11 bring our students back into buildings.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: And then in terms
13 of when there is an incident where there is an
14 outbreak and you may have students or teachers alike
15 who are vaccinated. I know you said that if they are
16 asymptomatic, they may test but it's not required
17 that they test to come back in. I think that's what

18 -

19 MEISHA PORTER: Well, let me, let me clarify and
20 help friends so I don't mess this up. If anyone
21 tests positive, they will quarantine.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: Even if they are
23 vaccinated?

24 MEISHA PORTER: Even if they are vaccinated.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: Okay.

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2 MEISHA PORTER: However, if they are vaccinated,
3 they have ways to test back in right. And so, if
4 they – if you're positive, you stay out, you
5 quarantine until you are negative and then we return
6 in-person. But there's a difference for uhm, folks
7 who – say that again. Right, folks who are in close
8 contact, who are vaccinated, that have no symptoms
9 that may not need to quarantine.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: I just think that
11 we've seen uhm, even through uhm, following the
12 science and the data that testing is very helpful in
13 catching it quick and stopping the spread as well and
14 being able to respond quickly. And so, we also know
15 that the vaccination itself is not 100 percent
16 guarantee that someone would not necessarily get
17 COVID. So, I wanted to make sure that everyone is
18 getting tested if they are exposed or if they test
19 positive. Asymptomatic or not, vaccinated or not is
20 going to be critically important.

21 And it would be great if DOE uhm, as well as
22 DOHMH is able to put those like data points together
23 and share with the Council throughout the year, so
24 that we can understand what the trend is looking like
25 as we go and we have something to look back to. And

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2 then, my last question, and thank you for your
3 patience and thank you Chair for allowing this
4 opportunity.

5 Is in terms of what I've been calling the COVID
6 achievement gap. I'm interested in understanding
7 from a curriculum perspective and I guess it also
8 echoes what Council Member Miller was asking in terms
9 of the after school programs. So, in District 29 for
10 example, I believe we have only two after school
11 programs. What uhm, is being put in place to ensure
12 that our kids are getting connected to the much
13 needed resources to ensure that the gap they may have
14 felt through this past school year is addressed?
15 Because we know kids may matriculate out of that
16 grade but they may have lost the opportunity to learn
17 particular subject matters.

18 MEISHA PORTER: Thank you so much and you know,
19 just first of all I want to say to the whole Council
20 and for all of the ways that you all have shown up to
21 help support our schools throughout this last 18
22 months. We thank you and appreciate you and look
23 forward to being in partnership with you. We also
24 recognize the importance of making sure that we are
25 providing not only the social emotional supports but

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2 the academic supports that our students need and
3 leveraging all of the amazing resources from 100
4 percent fair student funding to the federal resources
5 to provide academic supports to our student. But
6 also really take this moment to make significant
7 investments in literacy, particularly early literacy,
8 which we've talked about significantly.

9 To build a curriculum in which students see and
10 experience in themselves and is welcoming and
11 affirming. And so, I ask Deputy Chief, our Chief
12 Academic Officer Linda Chen to join us to talk about
13 the academic investments that we're making this year,
14 which are so important to addressing what you talked
15 about. But I also want to say and I have to say this
16 every time folks talk to me about the gap. Our
17 babies learned so much over the last 18 months and we
18 want to lean into their brilliance. We want to lean
19 into their assets, to really lift up what they've
20 gained but also really leaning to bring them to the
21 places that we know that they can go, so Dr. Chen.

22 LINDA CHEN: Thank you and thank you Council
23 Member for really highlighting the academic work and
24 making sure not only are students coming into the
25 buildings feeling safe but welcomed and affirmed for

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2 who they are and I want to also underscore what the
3 Chancellor referenced as it is so important
4 especially now to make sure that we see every student
5 and their strengths and lead with their strengths.

6 Part of what we will be doing this year is as a
7 system, we know we also need to know what are the
8 strengths that our students have? And also, what are
9 the academic needs that they also have because we are
10 in a place where everyone needs to get additional
11 supports. Even though as the Chancellor said, our
12 students have learned quite a lot as well as the
13 adults in the system as to how to support our
14 students.

15 So, part of what she has discussed are a few
16 things. One is literacy. We know that literacy is
17 the gateway to accessing all knowledge and content.
18 And that is why it is important, not only as English
19 Language arts but disciplinary literacy in each of
20 the content areas. My colleague Christina Foti
21 mentioned earlier that there will be additional
22 academic recovery services for all students with
23 disabilities. That also applies to all students. It
24 is important for us that we know where our students
25 are, so we are measuring that through diagnostics and

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2 through data. So, that our teachers have the
3 information about what our students know. So,
4 whether a student is a general education student, is
5 a student with an IEP or a student whose first
6 language is not English, our multilingual learners.
7 We want to make sure that every student, we are clear
8 as a system what their strengths are and what their
9 needs are and we're prepared to be able to provide
10 what they need. Just as we've talked for hours now
11 in this hearing about health and safety preparation.
12 That academic preparation is also essential, so I
13 appreciate you asking the question.

14 In addition, the Chancellor also mentioned that
15 we are making investments to curriculum that students
16 for which students can see themselves in. While we
17 will have curriculum in another school year, start
18 2023. Until then, we are also making sure that every
19 classroom has libraries with books that reflect who
20 they are. We are beginning with that as well as
21 professional learning and supports for teachers, so
22 they are equipped to be able to leverage the assets
23 of our students.

24 As we create the curriculum in the next few
25 years, we are leveraging our student and community

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2 voices and how they would like to see themselves in
3 this standards grade level curriculum. We are also,
4 we have amazing educators all across the system.
5 Teachers, administrators, who know so much about who
6 are students are and know so much about how to teach
7 them well according to the grade level standards. We
8 will absolutely also be leveraging their expertise
9 and their voice in this project. This is focused on
10 a curriculum that will meet the needs of New York
11 City students with the voices and the supports of New
12 York City educators.

13 We are doing a number of other additional
14 supports around academic recovery. You have asked
15 some questions about the digital divide and the
16 Chancellor has also mentioned investments that we
17 will be making as well for students, not only to have
18 devices and connectivity but also the skills that
19 they need to be able to navigate and research using
20 multiple platforms to be able to express what they
21 know and other expressions for what they know in
22 terms of content areas.

23 Uhm, in addition to early literacy, we are also
24 focusing on making sure that we know what our
25 students assets are in their math as well and that

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2 will also be work that will be done. We are
3 providing supports for teachers on instruction for
4 core instruction to leverage that information to
5 personalize for students. We also have interventions
6 and we are providing training for teachers in those
7 areas as well. It is very important to us to make
8 those investments to be academically prepared as well
9 as prepared socially, emotionally and in health.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you. I'm
11 sorry, I promise one last question. Thank you Chair.
12 So, the last question is how will the potential class
13 size reduction impact the ancillary services
14 available to students?

15 LAUREN SICILIANO: Thank you for the question.
16 Uhm, and I just wanted to say an enormous thank you
17 to the Council for your support in this area in
18 securing the resources for the class size reduction
19 allocation, which I think is what you're referring to
20 that was included in the adopted budget. Is that
21 what you're referring to?

22 COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: I'm sorry, I'm
23 having a hard time hearing you. That's why I keep
24 going like this.

1
2 LAUREN SICILIANO: I'll move the mic closer,
3 sorry. I just wanted to say, I believe you're asking
4 about the class size reduction allocation that was
5 negotiated and on behalf of the Council with the
6 adopted budget this past year, which was – and I was
7 just saying thank you to the Council for your support
8 in that area.

9 Through that allocation, we will be hiring about
10 140 teachers for those 75 elementary schools that are
11 part of that program. Those elementary schools were
12 identified because they had uhm, larger than average
13 class sizes, higher economic need and uhm, we're
14 struggling with literacy. And so, in those schools,
15 we've been able to invest these additional resources
16 to free up time for those schools to focus more on
17 literacy and leverage all the investments that our
18 Chief Academic Officer was discussing.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

20 LAUREN SICILIANO: Sure.

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: And finally, Council Member
22 Levin.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Thank you very much. Uhm,
24 hi Chancellor.

25 MEISHA PORTER: Hello.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Nice to see you. Thank
3 you for your patience this afternoon. Uhm, so uh, I
4 just want to read from the DOE's website. This is
5 the list of vaccinations that students are required
6 to have. Uhm, all students from those in childcare
7 through grade 12 the diphtheria, tetanus and
8 pertussis DTAP, polio virus, MMR, that's the measles,
9 mumps and rubella, varicella Hep B. Children under
10 five enrolled in child care and Pre K are required to
11 have the hemophilia influenza type B or HIV, the PCV
12 the pneumococcal conjugate and the influenza flu
13 vaccine. Children in grades 6-12 are required to
14 have the DTAP booster and the pneumococcal conjugate
15 MENACWY vaccine.

16 When the FDA approves one or more of the uhm,
17 COVID vaccines in the winter, which is what they are
18 indicating that they will for children under the age
19 of 12. The expectation is for children as low as
20 five. Will the Department of Education require the
21 COVID vaccination for students in our DOE schools?
22 And I'll just say for the record, my daughters
23 birthday is February 8th, her fifth birthday. That
24 is the day that I will bring her in to get her COVID
25 vaccine hopefully. So, I look forward on February

1
2 8th for that to be fully approved by the FDA and I
3 will bring her in on the first day that she is
4 eligible for it.

5 MEISHA PORTER: Thank you. So, I will say that
6 that is a health decision and so, I wish our friend
7 Dr. Chokshi was still here who could really speak to
8 that and answer that question. We make the academic
9 decisions and our health partners make the health
10 decisions.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Okay, is there anyone from
12 DOHMH here that could answer that?

13 MEISHA PORTER: No.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Okay, there's nobody else,
15 no Deputy here?

16 MEISHA PORTER: No.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Okay, I strongly - I'm not
18 going to be here in the Council after December 31st.
19 Uhm, I am begging you to require vaccination for
20 students as low as age five as soon as it's approved
21 by the FDA.

22 And frankly, I am disgusted by the display that I
23 have seen in these chambers today from members of the
24 public and the misinformation and disinformation that
25 is spread out there into, into the, and poisoning the

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2 well of the conversation. Not only in this city but
3 throughout the country and it is incumbent upon those
4 of us in a position of responsibility and as
5 government officials, to trust the science. To
6 follow the science and when the FDA fully approves it
7 for students, it is absolutely essential that we do
8 what's right to protect all of us by requiring that
9 vaccination. And I just want to commend the de
10 Blasio administration as a whole for having the
11 courage to extend mandates to the greatest extent
12 that they've been able to so far. And really leading
13 uhm, really taking a leadership role for the entire
14 country because no other executive that I can see has
15 taken such far reaching steps around the country.

16 So, I just want to thank, thank you - I want to
17 thank the entire administration but I want to thank
18 you as well Chancellor for your leadership in the
19 DOE.

20 MEISHA PORTER: Thank you.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Uh, uh in terms of - this
22 is also a health question, so you might not be able
23 to answer but in terms of uhm, the types of rapid
24 tests that we're able to access and use. I'm just
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1
2 curious if we have the ability to uhm, have access to
3 a uhm, extensive supply of the rapid PCR tests?

4 MEISHA PORTER: Yeah, that's another question for
5 our friends at the Health Department.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: I'll follow-up with them
7 as well.

8 MEISHA PORTER: Yes.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Because that is uhm, as a
10 diagnostic test, uhm, the uhm, I think the most
11 effective way - I mean there is antigen tests and
12 whether there is - whatever balance there is between
13 the rapid PCR but there are so many options right now
14 for rapid testing.

15 MEISHA PORTER: Yes.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Uhm, that uhm, you know
17 that in coordination with a vaccine mandate I think
18 is the most effective way to prevent any large scale
19 super spreading events or outbreaks.

20 And then, lastly, just in terms of uhm, uh, the
21 uh, federal funding that DOE has received. Uhm, is
22 there, is there a full accounting of the COVID
23 related funding that DOE has received and is that
24 going to be made available to the public? I've
25 gotten questions about that from constituents.

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MEISHA PORTER: Yeah.

LAUREN SICILIANO: Yes, thank you. We do have posted on our website and I'd be happy to share after the hearing a plan that outlines how we intend to spend the COVID funds and that followed not just obviously internal development but also public engagement as well and I'd be happy to share that as a follow-up to the hearing.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Okay, thank you so much and thank you Chair very much for your time.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you Council Member. Chancellor, I just have very quickly just a couple of follow-up items and then this will - first of all, I appreciate you staying here and your team the entire time and I apologize to everyone that what transpired here. It's unacceptable in this institution and I want to note that for the record.

Just a couple of quick follow-ups with regards to instruction during the quarantine. I know that in a previous announcement with the Mayor, there was a discussion about some new evolving guidance or information about that. So, is there something new here today with regards to for example what the expectations will be for elementary school kids,

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2 middle school, high school kids, should they be
3 required to quarantine? And who is responsible to
4 provide instruction in the middle and high schools
5 because the teachers there are required to be in the
6 school and they don't have the learning pods that you
7 have in elementary school.

8 MEISHA PORTER: So, I'll let Lauren Siciliano
9 talk about we've been really working with our union
10 partners to answer those questions and I have to say,
11 and I know because we've had conversations about
12 this, the commitment to continuing instruction for
13 our students throughout in a quarantine is there from
14 all of us and Lauren can talk a little bit about
15 where we are. But I just want to say that I want to
16 acknowledge our union partners and their commitment
17 to ensuring that we're working together to continue
18 instruction for our students.

19 LAUREN SICILIANO: Absolutely, thank you
20 Chancellor and thank you Chair. Uhm, so you are
21 right that in the back to school booklet there was
22 some initial information about what learning would
23 like during quarantine. Uhm, and today we've shared
24 some additional specificity around that.
25

1
2 So, for uhm, in cases where a whole class needs
3 to quarantine, this will primarily be in elementary
4 schools where students are not vaccinated. Students,
5 when they are quarantined and learning remotely will
6 be receiving live instruction from the teacher. So,
7 that will be the case for what we call whole class
8 closure.

9 As you think about middle and high schools, where
10 it's more likely that we would have more of these
11 partial class closures to your point where some
12 students are vaccinated and some are not. In those
13 instances as long as the teacher also does not need
14 to quarantine, the teacher would teach in-person the
15 students who are still in-person during the school
16 day and they would also provide asynchronous digital
17 materials for the students who are quarantining. In
18 addition to providing office hours during the weeks
19 of quarantine to support those students who are
20 learning asynchronously. To set up small tutorials,
21 answer questions about assignments or help them
22 follow-up on the work.

23 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: So, when you say
24 asynchronous, are you meaning that teachers will be
25 asked to provide some online material for the kids to

1
2 work on. But that will not be a live person with
3 them. That's going to be independent learning.

4 LAUREN SICILIANO: That's correct.

5 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: On their own. Is that
6 correct?

7 LAUREN SICILIANO: Yes, it will be a combination
8 of those asynchronous materials as you just described
9 plus office hours with the teacher during the weeks
10 of quarantine to ask questions, to do small group
11 tutorials, things like that.

12 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: And do you foresee or is it
13 possible that some schools will just prepare
14 worksheets or packets for kids to work on during the
15 seven to ten days? Or all schools will be required
16 to provide this asynchronous remote instruction? Can
17 you speak to that?

18 LAUREN SICILIANO: So, all schools will be
19 providing the asynchronous content that I just
20 described, that's right.

21 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Okay, because this is
22 something that has irked me and it's not, this is
23 just in general. Uhm, when I hear some folks on
24 public universe say like, oh, just give the kids some
25 handouts. That was not acceptable in my school and I

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2 would not, I think, I appreciate the answers here on
3 that and I appreciate also our labor partners who I
4 know both educators, teachers, principals, school
5 staff, they have been really uh, very, vocal on this
6 issue as well.

7 Question about kids who have to quarantine. Uh,
8 will they have access to school meals? And what will
9 that look like for them? Because this is something
10 that weighs heavy on my mind. Can anyone speak to
11 will kids have access to meals during quarantine?

12 KEVIN MORAN: We can make arrangements for grab
13 and go options that existed during the pandemic. And
14 so, for classes that go to quarantine, we'll work
15 locally with the school food manager to make sure
16 that's available for families.

17 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Okay, so just to be clear.
18 So, there will be, there is going to be a plan for
19 this is that right?

20 KEVIN MORAN: Yeah, so currently the school staff
21 workers have met with the principals and have talked
22 about where we're going to bring the meals in the
23 building if not in the cap and so, we'll make sure
24 there is set asides if we go into a classroom closure
25

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2 or the building closure, those being made available
3 at the building, absolutely.

4 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Will there be like
5 delivery?

6 KEVIN MORAN: Uh, during the pandemic, we did
7 have delivery options but we currently are not using
8 and food delivery options but would be available to
9 school.

10 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Because if a kid has to
11 quarantine for ten days, I don't know if food is like
12 that shelf stable to last uh?

13 KEVIN MORAN: Yeah, I'm going to meet with our
14 director of food service after the hearing today and
15 I'll get back to you on the protocol.

16 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Okay, I would absolutely
17 appreciate that. Kevin, also just a follow-up quick
18 question. The supplies you mentioned about masks and
19 sanitizer, other sanitary supplies, is that available
20 also to nonpublic schools in addition to public
21 schools?

22 KEVIN MORAN: The initial allocation last year
23 was made available to all schools. We have since
24 transitioned to schools themselves independently
25 including our own custodian's ordering.

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2 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: So, just to be clear, if a
3 nonpublic school contacts your office needing hand
4 sanitizer or something, is that because last year,
5 last school year, they were given supplies if there
6 was extra. What's the policy this year?

7 KEVIN MORAN: Let me follow-up with the nonpublic
8 office on their allocations and their supply chain
9 management and I will get back to you.

10 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Okay, uhm, I will ask – I
11 will have additional items to speak about because I
12 now the interest of time. I will be here to hear all
13 public testimony but I want to thank all of you for –
14 this is incredibly, critical, vital, important work
15 and I mentioned it at the beginning of the hearing,
16 uh, we might not agree fully on the issue of a remote
17 option for families but I do appreciate hearing that
18 there are preparations to pivot because I think we
19 all share the same ultimate goals. We want all of
20 our kids and our staff and our families safe,
21 supported and learning. And to meet their needs to
22 the best of our abilities. We all share the same
23 goals. We're on the same team when it comes to that
24 issue Chancellor and to your team.

25 MEISHA PORTER: Yes, hmm, hmm.

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2 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: And I appreciate and
3 recognize the work of your team, your offices and
4 also the folks have been very responsive to me when
5 I've asked very specific questions and I get very
6 passionate because the teacher in us care. You know,
7 Council Member Dinowitz asked about air purifiers
8 having a teacher moment. I shared with him that in
9 my school, Kevin, I was going to ask you, how are
10 they powered? Do you they get plugged in into
11 outlets? Because in my old school, which I love, the
12 Utrecht, if, if the microwave was turned on, my smart
13 board would turn off. That's my teacher moment.

14 I knew someone was making lunch when my board was
15 out. Can you speak to this issue?

16 KEVIN MORAN: Yeah, one of the reasons we picked
17 this unit is because it's efficient and secondly, as
18 a, as a uh, part of the AC for All Initiative, we've
19 made significant enhancements in this administration
20 to upgrading our power infrastructure and that's
21 inclusive of CON ED bringing different legs to the
22 building so that we could add extra panels and run
23 them in the classroom.

24 So, we really, forgive the expression, amped up
25 uh, this program. But definitely available in the

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2 classrooms. We'll make sure anybody that has any
3 issues with cabling or such is resolved. But as of
4 now, they had the one last year. And the second,
5 I've been in many, many classrooms. There is not an
6 issue with the supply right now in terms of
7 electricity.

8 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Alright, alright, thank
9 you. Thank you Chancellor and thank you to the
10 entire team for your testimony today. Much
11 appreciated.

12 MEISHA PORTER: Thank you.

13 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We'll turn to public
14 witnesses in just a few minutes but we'll just
15 transition and get set up for the public. So, we'll
16 be back in a few moments. [3:44:16-3:53:19].

17 Okay, if everyone can go back to their seats,
18 we're going to go ahead and get started with the
19 public portion of this hearing. And our first panel,
20 if they want to go ahead and get ready will be Henry
21 Rubio from CSA and from Gale Brewer's Office Shawn
22 Jean-Louis. And just to remind everyone so everyone
23 is speaking for the same amount of time and it is
24 equitable for everyone, the Sergeant's will be
25 starting a three minute clock. It's right over there

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2 and it will chime when your time is up. We just ask
3 when you hear the chime that you wrap up your final
4 thoughts.

5 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Great, you may begin.
6 Thank you.

7 HENRY RUBIO: Good afternoon. My name is Henry
8 Rubio and I am the Executive Vice President of the
9 Council of School Supervisors and Administrators CSA.
10 We serve, we are the 6,000 men and women that have
11 dedicated their lives to the service of their city's
12 children and their families. The vast majority of
13 our members are the first feet to step into a school
14 building and the last one's out.

15 Uhm, we are the principals, assistant principals,
16 education administrators, supervisors of and early
17 childhood care directors across the city. And while
18 we represent those school administrators, our
19 constituents are the students that we serve, their
20 families, our teachers, our other employees, our
21 community-based organizations. The surrounding
22 community.

23 So, when we voice concerns, it's not just from
24 our members but from the communities that we are
25

1
2 intertwined with that we shop with, that we live with
3 and that we serve on a daily basis every single day.

4 And so, I'll keep my comments very brief today
5 uh, for the sake of time. And I'll begin by just
6 saying the reopening of this school year is so far
7 with just less than five school days away, not much
8 better than it was last year. For the same three
9 reasons that we were plagued with last year. They
10 are untimely, unclear, and unreasonable policy
11 rollout practices.

12 Councilman Treyger, I followed your public
13 comments and you are 1,000 percent correct. We
14 appreciate how often you travel the city to talk to
15 school leaders, to listen, to understand and to
16 support. You have consistently shared with the
17 public the concerns that our members have shared with
18 us. And that we have shared with the Department of
19 Education since April on a weekly and monthly basis.

20 You have consistently shared the critical
21 information with the public that too often the
22 administration fails to share and be transparent with
23 parents and the public. For instance, when we talk
24 about being untimely, you've spoken, you yourself Mr.
25 Chairman and other City Council members have talked

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2 about the untimely information about quarantining and
3 what's going to happen. We have been asking for this
4 for months. I personally have been sitting on the
5 table and today for the first time, I heard what the
6 Department of Education's plan is.

7 I can tell you that as I sat here I was getting
8 emails that the Department of Education has now
9 informed the public about their plan as we sat here.
10 Our principals right now at 2:15 in the afternoon are
11 in their buildings getting ready for a school system
12 that is opening in five business days. And they
13 don't know this information yet. And it goes back to
14 the root cause of this trifecta of trouble.
15 Untimely, unclear, and unreasonable rollouts.
16 Principals needed this information weeks ago. I
17 haven't seen it. I haven't had the opportunity to
18 review it yet but in the little bit I heard, when are
19 these office hours going to happen? Who are going to
20 be the teachers to do them? How is this being paid
21 for?

22 All of these unanswered questions are the things
23 our principals need to effectively and safely run
24 their schools in an orderly fashion. I commend you
25 uhm, for the way you handled uhm, the episode that we

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2 experienced and I'm getting goosebumps because as our
3 school leaders, most of them coming back from summer
4 vacations and breaks that were well deserved, they
5 are preparing for the school year, experience similar
6 things when they hold orientations and welcome back
7 events. Their passions are high and there is a lack
8 of information and misinformation. And too often,
9 our school leaders are left in front of a room being
10 unable to provide their families and their
11 communities with the answers that they need in a
12 timely fashion.

13 When we talk about uhm, uh, unclear, there is
14 still confusion for many principals about what
15 exactly are the social distancing expectations from
16 the Department. Because it's often not in writing,
17 conflicting, contradicting or unclear depending on
18 the district.

19 And I will close by saying and I know my time is
20 up. When we talk about unreasonable, we've already
21 talked here, you guys asked phenomenal questions
22 around uh, expectations around vaccination and
23 testing that I won't rehash here. But I will say
24 this, I can tell you this as a principal, as a parent
25 of three public school children, and my wife is a

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2 teacher, I am a principal. There is no substitute
3 for in-person learning by a qualified teacher in a
4 safe school led by a dedicated principal and all we
5 want is to have the information we need. The
6 resources we need and the time to adequately plan and
7 prepare for a safe school opening. And that's all
8 our members have been asking.

9 Thank you for the time. On behalf of every
10 member of CSA and our President Mark Cannizzaro,
11 thank you and I'd be welcome to answer any questions
12 later.

13 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: I just and before we hear
14 from the next, I just want to say as a teacher, as a
15 Council Member, as Chair of Committee, obviously
16 first and foremost, you would agree that it's all
17 about the kids right? Children, safety, learning
18 uhm, and of course as a former teacher, I love my
19 education family as far as the incredible work but I
20 also know that it's the school leadership that
21 ultimately gets as you just pointed out, the last
22 minute emails or sometimes learns about things on
23 Twitter or in an article or on television in the
24 morning while they are in meetings.

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2 That they are ultimately responsible to
3 operationalize everything. And all the calls, all
4 the questions or emails go to them and if you've
5 heard my exchange today with the Administration about
6 a principal; I went to school to be a principal. I
7 never was but I and I had the honor of shadowing a
8 school leader.

9 HENRY RUBIO: You'd be great.

10 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: And you know, just to give
11 folks context, school leadership prepares for the
12 next school year not typically two weeks before the
13 start of school. Typically, they are already
14 planning for September, I would say even January or
15 February. They are already thinking of hiring
16 decisions, programs for next year. That's how it
17 works. For principals only to get certain guidance
18 now and still, there is still a lack of clarity on
19 some items, it's unconscionable. And ultimately,
20 they have to advance an instructional agenda forward.
21 They are still reasonable to make sure that kids are
22 learning instruction, instructional goals are being
23 met and expectations are being set. They observe
24 classes. They have to then debrief afterwards, share
25 observations and have conferences. All of that and

1
2 principals performance review, checklist, compliance
3 checklists, make sure services are being rendered,
4 and now, they are going to have to conduct quickly in
5 high school and middle schools. We heard it here.
6 They are going to have to conduct contact tracing.
7 The situation room does not know the schedule of kids
8 in high school. They don't know who has second
9 period history, who has third period English. They
10 are going to call the principal.

11 And so, and I said to the Chancellor, there's a
12 cost to this. The cost will be instruction. The
13 cost will be - again, they are incredible workers.
14 But that means that's one last observation. That's
15 one last staff conference. That's one last sharing
16 best practice because they are on the phone doing
17 crisis management. Trying to make it work for the
18 kids.

19 And so, and I also want the public to know that
20 you know, Summer Rising finished several weeks ago.
21 Principals in my district and I'm sure other parts of
22 the city were still in their offices in their
23 schools. Planning, preparing, operationalizing for
24 almost every contingency. You heard the Chancellor
25 today talk about you know, we may have to pivot to

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2 remote. Some principals I know, they are already ten
3 steps ahead. Because that's what principals do. And
4 I, some folks, they cancelled their vacations. They
5 postponed family plans. Some folks postponed ever
6 weddings. And I just, want to just acknowledge the
7 incredible work, sacrifice and service of course our
8 educators who are family to me but the incredible New
9 York City school leaders who are just incredible
10 heroes and essential workers as well.

11 So, I want to publicly just acknowledge that and
12 thank you to the entire CSA family.

13 HENRY RUBIO: Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you sir. Please,
15 sure, next, please.

16 SHAWN JEAN-LOUIS: So, my name is Shawn Jean-
17 Louis, I'm the Education Policy Analyst over at -

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Uhm, can you just see if the
19 uhm, if the mic's on. I don't think it is.

20 SHAWN JEAN-LOUIS: Yeah, it's on.

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Oh, okay.

22 SHAWN JEAN-LOUIS: I'll get a little closure.

23 So, I'm the Education Policy Analyst over at Gale
24 Brewer's office. I am going to be reading in her

25 statements today and subsequently submitting a little

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2 bit more lengthy comments on her behalf to the
3 Council.

4 My name is Gale A. Brewer and I am the Borough
5 President of Manhattan. Thank you to Chair Treyger
6 and to the Education Committee for the opportunity to
7 testify at this morning's oversight hearing regarding
8 the New York City Department of Education –

9 [UNKNOWN]: [INAUDIBLE 4:03:58].

10 SHAWN JEAN-LOUIS: Sorry, I think it's the mask.
11 Thank you to Chair Treyger and the Education
12 Committee for the opportunity to testify at this
13 morning's oversight hearing regarding the New York
14 City Department of Education's school reopening
15 protocols for the 2021-2022 academic year.

16 I am here to express my support for the full
17 reopening of schools, but also to elevate the
18 concerns of families and communities in hopes that
19 they will be recognized and respected in the form of
20 a slightly modified safety plan. First and foremost,
21 I am in favor of including a remote option as part of
22 the plan to fully reopen schools. As I do not
23 believe the two approaches are mutually exclusive.

24 Communities have been communicating this desire
25 for an option to their CEC representatives in every

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2 district in Manhattan. Secondly, families have been
3 communicating concerns to my office as well regarding
4 what the perceive to be uhm, a lack of robustness in
5 the testing procedures that are planned for this
6 upcoming school year. The feasibility of social
7 distancing during lunch. The handling and the
8 quality of instruction during middle school and high
9 school student quarantines. And some vaccine
10 hesitancy that still needs to be addressed as well.

11 I would also like to take a minute to address the
12 school-based mental health allocations and
13 initiatives. So, on Tuesday, August 24th, Deputy
14 Chancellor LaShawn Robinson was kind enough to join
15 the Vaccine and Recovery Taskforce that my office
16 hosts every week. There it was indicated that the
17 DOE is 80 percent complete with regard to the goal of
18 hiring 650 mental health practitioners for New York
19 City schools this upcoming school year. This was
20 exciting news but in a letter dated July 20th, I
21 raised some concerns to the agency regarding the
22 tangible measures in place to recruit practitioners
23 of color and culturally competent practitioners. As
24 well as measure in place to ensure that social
25 workers will be receiving high quality supervision

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2 from skilled and experienced practitioners. I was
3 pleased to hear that every district will have a
4 social work supervisor.

5 As I want to ensure school level practitioners
6 are being utilized in a way that maximizes the use of
7 their skill set and cultivates their development in
8 order to produce an even stronger practice.

9 Lastly, I'm concerned about school level funding.
10 A lot of money has been infused into the DOE over the
11 course of the past year. Communities and advocates
12 won major victories when it came to foundation aid
13 and thereby fair student funding. However, recent
14 but preliminary analysis conducted by my office
15 indicates that approximately 84 schools' FSF
16 allocations decreased in Manhattan because of
17 projected registration losses despite approximately
18 54 of them getting money allocated to boost their
19 formulas to 100 percent.

20 After their experience from March 2020 - June
21 2021, it is going to take extra school level fiscal
22 resources to address the lingering trauma of that
23 period.

24 Once again, thank you for allowing me to speak
25 today. I am appreciative of the DOE's effort

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2 regarding recent vaccine mandates and the effort to
3 be in alignment with CDC recommendations. However
4 sometimes, on a local level, growing and cultivating
5 relational trust with families and communities when
6 that trust has a history of consistently being eroded
7 takes a little more than what CDC guidelines have the
8 capacity to express.

9 So, I would like to urge the DOE to take this
10 into consideration to fortify their health and safety
11 measures as such. Thank you for your time.

12 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you and thank you and
13 also, to the – yes, absolutely, to the Borough
14 President Brewer for really being a – even before I
15 arrived to this Committee, being Chair of the
16 Committee, Gale Brewer has always really been a
17 champion for more social workers and supports in
18 schools. And I know this was a very big priority for
19 her as well and we did make sure in the budget that
20 there are resources centrally allocated. So, it's
21 not at the expense of a school's fair student funding
22 to hire social workers for every school that needs
23 one. So, every school should have one. And we're
24 planning additional hearings on – a hearing on that
25 item as well but uh, just please, definitely send our

1
2 thanks to the Borough President and her entire team
3 and also, for your support for a remote option for
4 kids and families. Thank you very much and also, my
5 colleague and future, future Council Member Mark
6 Levine.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: Thank you so much. Uhm,
8 I had to say that I agree that the current Borough
9 President Gale Brewer has just been amazing on all of
10 these issues but particularly, I'm grateful for her
11 leadership on the social emotional supports that kids
12 need. Staffing like guidance counselor and social
13 workers. And not a question for Mr. Rubio but I just
14 want to add my voice to say thank you to you and your
15 members. The principals in my district, I am
16 absolutely in awe of what they have done for their
17 kids and their teams over the last year and a half.
18 I mean, just relentless without rest. This summer
19 was intense for your members. Nothing even remotely
20 like a vacation and the fact that they have been able
21 to lead under these circumstance is an extraordinary
22 achievement.

23 So, thank you to you and your membership. You
24 have my profound gratitude. Thank you.

1
2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Council Member Brooks-Powers,
3 did you want to ask any questions or anything? Okay.
4 Thank you to you both. Uhm, the next panel and I'm
5 going to do my best with names, so I apologize. My
6 name gets butchered often, so if I make a mistake,
7 I'm sorry now.

8 Joseph Perez, Crystal Kothari , Cole, Lori
9 Podvesker Include NYC, and Dr. Debbie. Oh, it
10 doesn't matter. Just take whatever seat you'd like
11 and we could just start at one end and, and we just
12 ask that every body please just uhm, state their name
13 and any organization that they are with before
14 starting their testimony. And Cole, we can go ahead
15 and start with you.

16 COLE ALIEL: I was trying to be third. Anyway,
17 alright. Hi, my name is Cole Aliel(SP?) and I am a
18 mother of two teenagers. So I am here as a citizen.

19 Uhm, I'd like to provide a perspective - oh, my
20 gosh, I can barely read my writing, which is woefully
21 under represented in this room. And I would like to
22 be heard because I know that my opinion is a minority
23 opinion.

24 My husband and I have decided to take our
25 daughter out of New York City public schools and home

1
2 school her because she simple cannot tolerate masks.
3 Follow the science was what we were told to do these
4 last 19-months as our health advisors have
5 flipflopped, stretched the truth and outright lied
6 about so many aspects of the situation. I am
7 surprised at how one sided this discussion has been
8 around more masks, more testing and more
9 vaccinations.

10 So, let me just recap a few things on masks and
11 testing. If we're following the science and not just
12 popular science from the CDC and Dr. Fauci, then why
13 aren't we paying attention to the science that
14 concludes that wearing a mask is to a virus what a
15 chain link fence is to a mosquito. It offers no
16 protection against viruses because the particle size
17 is too small.

18 I repeat, a mosquito and a chain link fence. And
19 I want to be heard. But what is the DOE and the
20 powers that we propose to mask our kids again when
21 they don't work and they do cause harm. Oh gosh, I
22 can't even read my writing. Anyway, they do cause
23 harm. They are not a net neutral on health. Dr.
24 Blaylock, a Board Certified Neurosurgeon wrote about
25 this way back in June of 2020, over a year ago. In

1
2 his article, he detailed some of the neurological and
3 developmental issues with masking. But you don't
4 hear anyone talking about that. It doesn't make
5 popular science. There have been several studies
6 supporting the fact that they're ineffective, so
7 why are we still masking? This feels like Tom
8 Felly up here. I suspect it's because it makes
9 people feel better or maybe it's just a symbol, like
10 Dr. Fauci said.

11 Testing was another burden placed in our
12 children, because we had to ensure the safety of the
13 school environment. We learn that schools are not
14 significant areas of disease spread. And like Ms.
15 Porter said, and I did the calculation myself, we're
16 at about .3 percent. I thought she said .03. I
17 calculated .28 but anyway, positivity rate at the end
18 of the year. So, how dangerous are schools really?
19 And Mr. Borelli started the line of questioning that
20 said, you know, if we're testing at a .3 percent
21 positive rate, is that really unsafe enough to fire
22 our qualified teachers who are licensed?

23 The PCR test is the same test that the FDA has
24 issued. A future recall effective at the end of this
25 year 2021. Because it's not accurate. If the test

1
2 has been found to invalid, why wait FDA and why use
3 at DOE? Please don't say we're following the
4 science. It seems to me like we're following the
5 leader, though I'm not sure who that leader would be
6 at this point. Perhaps the leaders we are following
7 are big Pharma who have gained massive profits
8 throughout the use of these two weeks to flatten the
9 curve. If that's the case, then I'm sure we the
10 people will lose because both Pfizer and J&J are
11 already convicted felons. Moderna just has a little
12 more time to make up for this because this is their
13 first commercial product for use in humans.

14 Masking, testing and even these experimental
15 vaccines are no way following the science. We cannot
16 run from a virus. It proves a wildly adversary.
17 Don't take it from me, go listen to experts in
18 epidemiology and infectious disease who are on record
19 saying that we cannot lock down, mask or vaccinate
20 our way out of this. And why should we when
21 according to the CDC it has a 99.997 percent survival
22 rate in children. Don't believe me. Go look it up.

23 Why do we need to put children at risk of brain
24 damage, social anxiety, developmental delays,
25 depression, suicide, headaches, bacterial infections,

1
2 staph infections, the list goes on. Just to feel
3 like we're doing something.

4 We just follow the CDC with their history of
5 coverups and experimentation on the public. Masking
6 and testing in our schools have no scientific grounds
7 to stand on and you are harming our children. You
8 mentioned the randomized testing of unvaccinated
9 students only when the CDC has already admitted that
10 both vaccinated and unvaccinated have similar amounts
11 of viral particles in their nasal pharynx.

12 So, it sounds to me like a plan to blame things
13 on the unvaccinated and vaccine status should not be
14 a factor in who gets tested.

15 I know my time is up. I'm sorry, I had prepared
16 longer comments. I just want to say that there are
17 lots of doctors out there who are not following what
18 Fauci says and who have scientifically feared out new
19 way. Science is not a static thing. It is something
20 that it always ongoing. Dr. Zelenko, Dr. Ioannidis,
21 Dr. Eden, Dr. Malone, Dr. Bridal, Dr. Mann, Dr.
22 Palevsky, Dr. Blaylock, Dr. Cowan, Dr. McCall out of
23 Texas. These are all doctors who do not see things
24 the way that it seems this board does.

1
2 We've told our son who does plan to go back to
3 school, that we want him to take notice of how he
4 feels. If his soul feels crushed or school feels
5 like he's entered the prison system, to let us know
6 and we will pull him out as well. You leave us
7 little choice. Thank you.

8 LORI PODVESKER: Hi, my name is Lori Podvesker
9 and I lead the policy work at Include NYC. And I'm
10 also a parent of an 18-year-old who attends the
11 District 75 program.

12 I first want to start off saying thank you to
13 this Committee for holding this hearing and an extra
14 thank you to you Chairman Treyger for your long time
15 commitment to our kids and also your leadership and
16 especially your leadership today. Thank you.

17 Sure. So, while we commend the Mayor and the
18 Chancellor for their efforts to bring back one
19 million children in-person to classrooms on September
20 13th, we testify today with great urgency for City
21 Hall to address the pressing educational and
22 emotional needs of 300,000 plus students with
23 disabilities ages 3-21 right now in New York City.

24 Students with disabilities are among the most
25 academically and socially impacted group of students

1
2 within our public school system the last 18 months.
3 Almost half of whom have not been attending in-person
4 instruction in school since the start of the
5 pandemic. 85 percent of students with IEP's are
6 BIPOC and we know COVID has affected these
7 communities more than others. Less than two weeks
8 away from the first day of school, we are still
9 waiting for the city to release its official plans on
10 how schools will address a makeup, missed instruction
11 and related services. Also known as compensatory
12 services.

13 Families need to know now how they best can
14 prepare to be involved in the decision making process
15 regarding compensatory services with their child's
16 IEP team. But this is not possible without official
17 guidance from the Department of Education and the
18 criteria the city will use when making these
19 decisions nor a timeline for when implementation will
20 begin.

21 It's also not fair to school administrators who
22 need this information as soon as possible so they can
23 appropriately operationalize and staff accordingly to
24 deliver services.

25

1
2 There has also been no mention if and how related
3 services such as speech therapy, one on one will be
4 provided remotely for students with disabilities will
5 be asked to quarantine due to a shutdown of their
6 class or school. Nor do we know if the same group of
7 students should expect remote instruction to be
8 taught by certified special education teachers.

9 In addition, we think it is a missed step for the
10 city not to offer full-time remote instruction to all
11 students and families who believe it is necessary for
12 their child and family. Including students with
13 documented psychological reasons that interfere with
14 their learning, including trauma and severe anxiety.
15 We also have concerns about students with
16 disabilities having equitable access to pandemic
17 recovery related activities. This includes the
18 provision of round trip transportation from a
19 student's school, after school and Saturday programs.

20 It also includes the needs for our students to
21 begin these supports and services sooner than the DOE
22 projected starting time in late October or early
23 November. School busing continues to be problematic
24 due to a lack of timely and accessible information
25 for families.

1
2 Policy changes such as bus route information is
3 only available through an NYC school account or
4 shared by a DOE employee. The city no longer mails
5 information to a student's home, yet many families do
6 not know this. We also have concerns about the
7 prospect of bus driver and attendance shortages,
8 adequate OPT staff who can process and resolve busing
9 related issues and the overall health and safety
10 procedures and practices for the 11,000 plus routes
11 that will fully be back in operation.

12 As a result, we recommend the following: That
13 the DOE immediately provide written guidance to all
14 1,800 schools on compensatory services. That the DOE
15 provides family friendly parallel information that
16 includes the use of visuals and is translated into
17 multi languages and available at the exact same time
18 as English materials. Unlike the Health and Safety
19 Guide that they released last week, which was only
20 available in English yet so many of our students
21 don't speak English in their families. And just, so
22 not okay anymore in this moment and time.

23 Uhm, we also want the information for families to
24 be inclusive of due process rights and a list of
25 independent non-DOE organizations who can help

1
2 support them. We want the DOE to release more
3 information on what remote instruction will look like
4 for students with disabilities. We want them to
5 create a citywide multilingual marketing campaign
6 targeted to families of students with disabilities
7 detailing the extra support and programs available.

8 Similar to how the city messages information on
9 school surveys, preschool enrollments and parents
10 applying to local and citywide education councils.

11 We want the DOE to amplify communication to
12 schools and families regarding student eligibility
13 for home instruction with an emphasis on students who
14 have psychological needs and not medical.

15 By no means am I minimizing the needs of students
16 with medical issues. Yet it is a very small
17 percentage of the overall group of students with
18 disabilities and nobody's – it's never cool to
19 compare one group suppression to another, yet there
20 is space for both. And it feels as if the DOE is not
21 giving enough attention to kids with documented
22 anxiety issues and trauma as a result of the last 18
23 months. And encourage people to look at the home
24 instruction website by the DOE which has this

1
2 information despite their failure to publicly talk
3 about it.

4 We'd like for the DOE to immediately provide a
5 date when bus route information will become available
6 for families and for them to provide transportation
7 and proactively plan for it for all students to and
8 from home and school for all programs. Unlike this
9 past summer with Summer Rising, in which so many
10 student with disabilities did not have the
11 opportunity to attend these programs because busing
12 was not provided from these program home at the end
13 of the day. And the majority of District 75 student
14 do not go to school in their neighborhoods, nor their
15 home district because there isn't an available
16 program or appropriate one and we need to change
17 that. Thank you for your time.

18 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Lori, thank you for always
19 centering the student population that quite frankly
20 to this day in many cases gets ignored, overlooked.
21 Uh, and you know my a retired D75 teacher and so,
22 this is very personal for us and uh, this hearing was
23 largely about school reopening plans or in some
24 cases, lack thereof and about the clarity. But
25 certainly, we want a deeper look on the academic

1
2 recovery, particularly compensatory services because
3 the concern that you have raised here but I've heard
4 from others as well, uhm, is making sure that if
5 there is Saturday afterschool programs, they are not
6 cookie cutter programs, you need to meet the needs of
7 - every IEP mandate has to be met and the hearing I
8 had last year, DOE testified about 80 percent or so
9 compliance rate with IEP's. That's over 40,000 kids
10 that did not have - so, and that's just the full
11 compliance. So, I appreciate you. I just want to
12 publicly say that as well. Thank you. Appreciate
13 you very much. And so it's, Malcolm reminded me,
14 it's been a long day.

15 We're having the hearing, it's on the agenda for
16 November.

17 LORI PODVESKER: Thank you so much. I just also
18 want to quickly point out that we have a problem with
19 data and we will moving forward and especially when
20 it comes to compensatory services. Because last
21 spring when the city shut down all schools, from
22 March 16th through the end of the school year on June
23 30th, the city counted any communication with
24 families as related services being delivered.

25

1
2 And so, there will be an intersection of that
3 with compensatory services and I want to highlight
4 that now publicly, so we can figure out some
5 solutions.

6 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you so much Lori.
7 Next please, thank you.

8 DR. DEBBIE: Hi, my name is Dr. Debbie [INAUDIBLE
9 4:24:31] a very long last name. I have a few
10 different roles. So I am a parent. I am a teacher
11 actually also at a medical school and uhm, I'm also a
12 physician. So, I see two problems. I see tremendous
13 fear of the virus and it's variants. We have a lot
14 of parents and children who are afraid of that and I
15 also see a lot of fear in terms of the measures that
16 we are using to combat the virus. So, as my
17 colleague here at mentioned, you know in terms of
18 some of the mandates that are being used or protocols
19 to combat the virus.

20 So, I just want to just say a little bit about my
21 experience because I am concerned about what might
22 happen this school year. So, the first time when
23 COVID hit, uh, so I have a child, when COVID hit and
24 the schools closed, what happened to me is that I
25 immediately had no child care. Now whether schools

1
2 are supposed to provide child care versus education
3 alone, is you know, debatable but that is another
4 role that they provide, correct?

5 So, I did not have child care and because I treat
6 patients with cancer, HIV, really in desperate
7 situations, I had to decide if I am going to take
8 care of my child or if I'm going to help these
9 patients because if I didn't help them, then it's
10 pretty much a death sentence. Because they are going
11 to have to go to the ER and at that time with
12 absolutely nothing to protect them from the virus and
13 no PPE, they would have died because they are the
14 most vulnerable.

15 So, I sent my child away. I thought she would be
16 gone for two weeks. I did not see her again for 8
17 months. And I love my child but I couldn't see her
18 because I was constantly grappling with this same
19 dilemma. So, the problem is now, parents who are in
20 my situation are still grappling with this. That if
21 the situation becomes bad again and they don't have
22 child care because the school closes or there is a
23 positive test or this lack of predictability, they
24 are not necessarily as quick to say, I'm going to
25 send my child away. They may say, you know what, I'm

1
2 a frontline worker but you know, we've had this much
3 time to figure it out. I'm just going to let my job
4 sort of you know go. I'm just not going to do this
5 anymore.

6 So, we're seeing this already because not just in
7 healthcare but in many frontline positions, people
8 are giving up their jobs. On top of that, in terms
9 of the measures that you are talking about, you know
10 there is a lot of people leaving. So, for example,
11 when it comes to the physician workforce, I just know
12 that being a physician, there's about 12 percent, 10-
13 12 percent is the estimate of women who have left the
14 physician workforce.

15 Then on top of that in Mississippi, they say
16 8,000 nurses which is a huge amount in such a small
17 state, have left because of the vaccine mandates.
18 That's one of the factors that's been mentioned. In
19 the past two days, California says it has a crisis
20 because of the vaccine mandates, that it's lost so
21 many nurses. South Carolina is another state that
22 says it has a crisis.

23 So, California, Mississippi, and South Carolina
24 as I mentioned. So, I am concerned that New York is
25 underestimating the effect of these vaccine mandates.

1
2 I think that we will lose a lot of teachers, not just
3 teachers but people who are performing all kinds of
4 other functions. Let's say cleaning the classrooms,
5 uhm, serving the children food. All kinds of other
6 things because of these polarizing mandates. It's
7 not that I'm against the vaccine, you know this is a
8 different thing but the mandates themselves that uh,
9 will cause people to maybe decide between having
10 their job or retiring or leaving.

11 California said that they thought they would have
12 substitutes come from other states to fill in this
13 nursing shortage and they're not able to attract
14 those workers. That's the healthcare industry. The
15 reason we're seeing it first there is because uhm,
16 there was an executive order by President Biden that
17 healthcare workers should get vaccinated first.

18 So, we're seeing it there. Because of that, it's
19 not just the COVID patients who are having problems.
20 They cannot treat people who are having heart
21 attacks. Who are having all kinds of dangerous and
22 life threatening problem. So, I think we should
23 learn from these other states who are having problems
24 and prepare for a problem here because then it will
25 not just be the children who are suffering within our

1
2 school system but we may see the whole city like as a
3 domino effect. Because if children cannot go to
4 school, then those frontline workers will stay home
5 to be able to take care of them and then our whole
6 city may have a ripple effect and crumble.

7 I mean, I now I will also say my other identity.
8 I am running for office; I'm running as the
9 Republican Nominee for Public Advocate. The reason
10 I'm running; I have never run for office before but
11 is because of all of these things that have happened
12 over the past year. So, I just wanted to bring that
13 to your attention.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: You know the nature of
15 the City Council is we give the public a chance to
16 testify. And we are very proud of that tradition.
17 It's important to the functioning of this body to
18 have open democracy. Uh, but I have an obligation to
19 respond to some of what's been said. Uh, by stating
20 very clearly that amidst a pandemic of a respiratory
21 virus which is transmitted primarily via airborne
22 means, masks save lives. They are critical.
23 Critical to our defense against this virus. The mask
24 I am wearing a KF94, filters out 94 percent of
25 unwanted particles. This is why we want the children

1
2 that we love and protect, the parents who are caring,
3 the adults who are caring for them, teachers and
4 other staff to protect themselves and the people
5 around them by wearing masks.

6 DR. DEBBIE: I did not say anything against the
7 masks though.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: No, sorry, you had a
9 chance to speak and your time is up.

10 DR. DEBBIE: I didn't say anything against the
11 masks.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: Thank you. I'm
13 responding to the other woman. You had a chance to
14 speak and your time is up. Actually, you spoke more
15 than your time. And as for the attack on mandates,
16 uh, this vaccine is stunningly safe, stunningly safe.
17 Arguably safer than aspirin. It is true that any
18 medication or treatment has some risks, yes, that is
19 true of aspirin as well.

20 But the benefits of protection by the vaccine so
21 vastly, vastly out weigh the risks. That it is
22 urgent that everyone who is eligible gets this
23 vaccine and as for medical exemptions etc., of course
24 it's going to be granted but I want to be very clear
25 that there are - it's like a minuscule number of

1
2 conditions in which a physician would advise someone
3 not to get the vaccine. There is a small number of
4 allergies and the more data we have the more we
5 understand that even in those cases, uh, the allergic
6 reactions are manageable.

7 Again, under guidance of a physician and this is
8 a vaccine which has been given hundreds of millions
9 of times in the United States. It is arguably
10 already one of the most scrutinized vaccines in human
11 history. So, I'm putting that on the record so that
12 no one watching this comes away with any
13 misconceptions and I am done now. Thank you Mr.
14 Chair.

15 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: I want to thank Chair Mark
16 Levine and I also want folks to know that uh, and I
17 want to publicly say this about Chair Levine. Uh, he
18 at many times, even the administration does not like
19 his positions or views. He is unafraid because he
20 speaks I know from the heart but also speaks to many,
21 many medical public health, I'm sorry, he speaks to
22 many, many public health medical professionals almost
23 on a daily basis quite frankly. On a daily basis and
24 I know that many folks, even my education family
25 follows his social media. Not just mine but follow

1
2 his on the latest that he's hearing from public
3 health experts as well and he shares it immediately
4 to get information out. Not to get a retweet, not to
5 get a Facebook like, not to cause a stir but to save
6 lives and to get the facts and the truth out there.

7 You know I am not a public health expert. I am a
8 teacher by trade but I'm also a student of history.
9 And I know for example you know, in 1947 a couple of
10 years after World War II, there was a small, small
11 pox outbreak in New York City. And small pox, I just
12 want to double check the figures, since 1900, killed
13 hundreds of millions of people around the world. And
14 it was actually a major vaccination effort in New
15 York City in 1947, where they vaccinated millions of
16 people in a few months. That actually helped save
17 many, many lives and I would venture to guess Chair
18 Levine that since 1947, there has been a couple of
19 medical advancements since that time. I know that
20 FDR, the President suffered from polio, a crippling
21 disease.

22 One of the vaccines that are required of folks
23 today is the polio vaccine. Thank goodness that
24 we've largely eradicated or have addressed polio.
25 Uhm, I actually want to commend and thank public

1
2 health experts that have been working feverishly to
3 get information out that helped develop such critical
4 vaccines using technology that I have heard has been
5 already kind of available but they just pieced it
6 together. So, it's not grabbed out of thin air. And
7 so, I, I, I hear folks. I hear the anxiety. I know
8 it's real. I get it and I try my best to meet people
9 where they are at but I do believe we have an
10 obligation to gather as much of yes, the facts,
11 information, public health experts around the world.
12 Not just here in New York, around the world.

13 It's not just here. They're using whether it's
14 Pfizer, Moderna in other parts of the world as well.
15 Not just here in New York.

16 So, I want to thank you Chair Levine that you
17 know we hear, there is a lot of passion and anxiety
18 and I hear it but I agree with you 100 percent, it's
19 an obligation of us to get critical information out
20 to the public and I really do firmly believe that.
21 And so thank you. I want to publicly thank you for
22 your leadership on that.

23 DR. DEBBIE: Polio has had a resurgence in
24 Pakistan because —

25 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Your time is up.

1
2 DR. DEBBIE: But you mentioned polio. I mean
3 that's -

4 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: This is not a campaign
5 event. Not a campaign event.

6 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: This is, respectfully -

7 DR. DEBBIE: But that was because they tricked
8 people in Pakistan. If you look it up, to catch -

9 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: Time is up. Thank you.
10 Thank you to this panel.

11 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you for your time.
12 Thank you. Next.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: Malcolm, can you call the
14 next panel?

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Next from Girls for Gender
16 Equity Ashley Sawyer, Margaret Quincy Medical Freedom
17 NYC. Margaret Quincy and Katherine Kothari (SP?).
18 Uhm, doing panels of three. Next on the list, David
19 from the 51st Assembly District.

20 Ashley, we'll go ahead and start with you and
21 then we'll just work our way down. And just everyone
22 remember if you could just state your name and your
23 organization before you begin your testimony for the
24 transcription. Thank you.

1
2 ASHLEY SAWYER: Good afternoon Chairperson
3 Treyger, Council Member, I won't bore you with the
4 background. You have a written copy of our testimony
5 in your inbox already but my name is Ashley Sawyer.
6 I am Senior Director of Campaigns at Girls for Gender
7 Equity. We're a Brooklyn based policy and youth
8 organizing organization. Really grateful for today's
9 hearing. We care deeply about public health and
10 safety for New York City public school students and
11 so, I just wanted to expand the conversation in
12 addition to the importance of protecting young people
13 from COVID-19. We also want to continue to press the
14 importance of the pandemic that we're living in of
15 racial injustice and in making sure that when we're
16 talking about school reopening, we're thinking about
17 the mental and emotional wellness of students
18 particularly cis and trans girls and nonbinary youth
19 of color.

20 So, this week, we released a report called 40,000
21 interventions and it's a five year look back of the
22 School Safety Act data. As you are aware, the data
23 was made possible by Council. Uhm, and on the five
24 year anniversary, the data is now public of all of
25 the interventions of school safety agents in schools.

1
2 And the data is just really concerning and very
3 alarming.

4 As an example, Black girls in New York City
5 schools were 8.3 times more likely than other girls
6 to be stopped by, questioned by or interact with
7 police in their schools. So, that's more than eight
8 times. That number is startling and it should be
9 concerning to anyone who wants to think about a safe
10 reopening that is fair for all students.

11 And another data point that I find really
12 concerning is that the NYPD utilize restraints,
13 meaning handcuffs, whether metal or plastic on
14 students an average of six times per school day. So,
15 six times a day on average over the past five years,
16 a student was put into restraints. We know that 51
17 percent of the cases were incidents ended in arrests
18 and 22 percent were incidents of children in crisis.

19 So, I want to just continue and I know Council
20 Member Treyger, you have been a staunch advocate of
21 restorative practices in mental health and emotional
22 wellness but I just want to emphasis that as students
23 are coming back to school, students of color are the
24 ones who have disproportionately lost aunts, uncles,
25 parents to the pandemic. Disproportionately been

1
2 impacted by lack of jobs, food scarcity and all of
3 the things that we've experienced over the past year
4 and it's so critical that they are returning to
5 classrooms and schools where they have supportive,
6 caring adults who are going to equip them with care
7 and respond to their need with gentleness, rather
8 than handcuffs or punitive policies.

9 And so, while today's hearing might be on a
10 different topic, I want to keep pressing our demand
11 that we remove police from schools and in the
12 interim, to not hire the 252 new school police that
13 are being proposed. Last year we gave a report about
14 the public health implications of school policing and
15 there is a lot of data that shows that it is really
16 harmful for students academically, socially and
17 emotionally.

18 I thank you for your time and I just appreciate
19 your advocacy around this issue. Thank you.

20 MARGARET QUINCY: I am Margaret Quincy and I
21 share with everyone here their concern about this
22 pandemic or this plague, whatever you want to call
23 it. I see it a little differently because through my
24 study and through my research, I do a lot. It turns
25 out that it submitted that it was a biological

1
2 weapon. And the virus itself, despite protein, is
3 not natural and it does cause long lasting harm. And
4 that is what people are being injected with.

5 So, you can make your own - put your own dots
6 together on that. I am part of a group called
7 Medical Freedom New York City and I am very grateful
8 for the Council to call this hearing to give me a
9 chance to air my concerns.

10 Our group includes citizens from all five
11 boroughs and we are affiliated nationally and
12 internationally. We hope that with information being
13 shared, rather than censorship applied, proper
14 decisions to protect citizens health will be acted
15 upon. On December 21, 2017, President Donald John
16 Trump signed an Executive Order to the effect that
17 any persons or groups involved in corruption that
18 serves to damage human rights and/or which is judged
19 to be crimes against humanity, either domestically or
20 internationally, they would be arrested and they
21 would have their property confiscated.

22 I'm not sure if Biden has rescinded that EO or
23 not but that's probably for another hearing. I
24 refuse to insult the intelligence of those present
25 here by pretending that members of this esteemed body

1
2 and the audience and the people who are going to read
3 this later that who have left have no idea what they
4 do. That would be insulting. Though if you truly
5 don't know what you are doing with the enforcement of
6 these edicts, I encourage you to look closer.
7 Everyone has access to information open source. Even
8 granting the massive Disinformation Campaign. The
9 shaming of those who hold alternative scientific
10 views.

11 The massive censorship of good information. The
12 flooding of propaganda and the constant lies which
13 attend around the social and medical experiment on
14 society and children of New York City. True science
15 allows opposing views since it has the power of
16 truth.

17 Are the ingredients in the injections safe? Have
18 you verified that? Who is liable for administering
19 an unsafe injection? Will the Council and the city
20 be verifying the safety of the approved injection
21 once the ingredients list is released? Will the
22 Council make a statement upon it? Everyone in this
23 room is on notice. Harm to children, forcing them to
24 submit to an injection which has failed to be
25 properly verified as safe, is a crime against

1
2 humanity and a crime against our country and our
3 future.

4 Taking away a citizens right to whit to be secure
5 in ones person and to be free from having ones body
6 seized by authorities is a capital crime. Is the
7 purpose of the lockdown and the masking really to
8 protect the citizens health? Can you justify the
9 actions upon these terms? What is the risk of having
10 children unmasked? What is the children's risk from
11 COVID-19 and the alleged variant Delta? Have you
12 looked into that? Have you gotten a second opinion?
13 Have you done due diligence? Are you simply taking
14 some sketchy agencies word for it? Shouldn't
15 something so important be verified personally? What
16 are the ingredients in the vaccine?

17 I understand Pfizer will be obligated to reveal
18 the ingredients in their vax in one in a half weeks
19 since it was tentatively approved. Do case merely
20 mean a test reading positive from a PCR test?

21 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Is it possible -

22 MARGARET QUINCY: Have you verified that test?
23 Does a positive reading mean a child is both sick and
24 contagious to others? How dangerous is COVID to
25 children?

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2 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: If you can just wrap up
3 your final thoughts.

4 MARGARET QUINCY: I respectfully suggest and I
5 beg that city administrators and City Council present
6 think long and deeply around their possible
7 alternative actions at this important time or anyone
8 who reads this later. Will someone in a position of
9 power have the conscience and act so that many lives
10 who otherwise would be destroyed could be saved.

11 To be blunt, the vax are killing and maiming
12 children. That is the premise of what I am saying
13 and you should verify this one way or the other. The
14 details of the administration are relevant unless
15 your premises are correct. Your premises are taken
16 for perhaps all sources. I humbly submit.

17 Do masks cause cognitive social psychological
18 damage to children?

19 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Ms. Quincy? The Chair is
20 just asking if you could wrap up your final thoughts
21 to be fair to everyone.

22 MARGARET QUINCY: Okay, I want to read the rest
23 in.

24 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: When the bell goes off, we
25 ask folks to wrap up their final thoughts.

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2 MARGARET QUINCY: Does the injection provably
3 protect against the disease? Are we being lied to?
4 It's essential to answer those questions. If you
5 have the answers to the questions, why are people
6 being censored? Thank you.

7 DAVID: Thank you Chairman. Thank you commission
8 members. My name is David [INAUDIBLE 4:47:00]. And
9 I would like to present from my district and I am
10 here to speak on behalf of our constituents, most of
11 whom are hardworking parents. But most importantly,
12 I'm here to speak on behalf of our children. Uhm, my
13 message is very simple. We all recognize that our
14 kids need to be in school learning. Remote learning
15 just not cut it for them. The damage to kids has
16 been terrible, academically, socially, and to their
17 mental health. Depression and suicide amongst teens
18 has skyrocketed and no one wants to talk about it.
19 But it's a direct result or reaching closures.

20 [INAUDIBLE 4:47:43] when parents do decide that
21 remote learning is an option of their choice for
22 whatever reason. We must recognize is that it is us
23 the parents, who get to decide what we want for our
24 kids. I am here on behalf of my constituents to
25 speak about freedom of choice that the parents have.

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Not by any one of you but by the founding fathers.
We the people demand that this Committee recognizes
simple fact. When it comes to remote learning or to
wearing masks by our children while on school
premises or forcing parents to inject their kids with
experimental mitigation so called, COVID vaccine by
various means. Such as shaming, spreading
disinformation about safety of these so called
vaccines.

Or by our elected officials while being coward by
qualified immunity. Lying in our faces that vaccines
are safe. I stand here to demand is that there be no
forced vaccinations, no forced faced coverings for
our children. The choice should be merely of the
parents. We the people will not comply with policies
[INAUDIBLE 4:49:59]. We will not comply.

Thank you and once again, my name is David
[INAUDIBLE 4:49:05].

COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: Thank you Mr. Chair.
First, I want to thank Ms. Podvesker for uh, did I
get the name wrong? Forgive me. Lori. Ah okay,
forgive me. Tell me your name again.

ASHLEY SAWYER: Ashley Sawyer Girls for Gender
Equity.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: Thank you. I got the
3 name wrong but your testimony was excellent.

4 ASHLEY SAWYER: Oh, thank you.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: And I'm grateful for your
6 voice here today. Uh, and I am not going to repeat
7 my uh, previous extended statement regarding some of
8 the other testimony that we've heard. I just want to
9 say again, on the record that these vaccines are
10 extraordinarily safe and they must be weighed against
11 a virus which in New York City has killed 33,840
12 people.

13 DAVID: Will you waive your qualified immunity?

14 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: No, sir. No, sir, you
15 had your chance.

16 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Sir, the Chair has the
17 floor.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: This is a - these
19 vaccines has killed zero people confirmed in New York
20 City. Again, weighed against a virus which has had
21 over 33,000 confirmed deaths. So, there is no
22 debate. There is no debate on the wisdom of taking
23 this vaccine and that must be the message that the
24 public receives today. Thank you again Mr. Chair.

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2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: The next panel that we will
3 be calling up Brenda Black, Josephine, that's all I
4 have. Jay Newall, Hashie Tischler(SP?), Robert
5 Kremer, Micha Beels(SP?), Jennifer Godard(SP?) and
6 Gregory Brender.

7 GREGORY BRENDER: Oh, thank you so much for the
8 opportunity to testify. My name is Gregory Brender
9 and I am here on behalf of the Daycare Council of New
10 York. We are federation of early childhood education
11 providers. Many of our members operating with DOE
12 contracts, providing a wide range of early childhood
13 services to children, zero to five in all boroughs in
14 New York City.

15 I just wanted to talk about a few key things that
16 we believe would be helpful for the reopening of
17 early childhood programs. We are - early childhood
18 providers are excited to open their doors but know
19 that we need to do just so safely.

20 So, a few of the key things. One is, we call on
21 Department of Education to work with community-based
22 early childhood provider to design proactively a
23 remote option so that when and if it does become
24 necessary to have a remote option that we can ensure
25 that children stay connected to caring adults, stay

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2 connected to their peers. Even though we know in-
3 person learning is better, if it is necessary, we
4 want to be absolutely sure that we have the highest
5 quality opportunities for children to continue
6 learning because they obviously only get one
7 childhood.

8 We also are calling on DOE to suspend the pay for
9 enrollment that's currently going in place with the
10 new contracts for this first school year. We believe
11 that with the pandemic continuing to rage, that uhm,
12 we expect there to be volatility in enrollment as
13 businesses reopen and close, as parents needs change
14 due to constantly changing situations.

15 Finally, we're calling on DOE to extend
16 community-based enrollment, which we've had in place
17 just during the summer for uhm, extended day
18 programs. These are programs that provide a full day
19 of care both during the summer and the school year
20 and uhm, we have just this summer been able to start
21 kids in programs during the period right after they
22 are cleared by their own program. This has helped to
23 build on the strong connections that families have
24 with community-based organizations. And we would
25 urge DOE to continue that throughout the school year,

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2 particularly to ensure that as parents are returning
3 children into childcare programs, they can build on
4 the connections and trust they have with community-
5 based organizations.

6 Thank you Chair Treyger and Chair Levine for all
7 of your work on behalf of early childhood and for
8 education throughout the city and we appreciate the
9 opportunity to testify.

10 JENNIFER GODARD: Okay, hello. Hello, City
11 Council Members remaining. I appreciate your
12 patience and your calm. I am very appreciative. My
13 son August, I am here as a parent. My son August, I
14 emailed you Council Member Treyger. He goes to PS216
15 in Sheepshead Bay and uhm, I want to thank you for
16 all the hard work you've done with the amazing
17 principal there Donna Alagia(SP?) make his learning
18 community so wonderful. Uhm, it's been just the best
19 school. I am sure you know the garden, the kitchen.
20 Anyway, my son is not here with me today because uhm,
21 we don't bring him indoors in large numbers of people
22 because of his health disabilities. He has asthma
23 and an overactive immune disorder.

24 He is prescribed a rescue inhaler and epi pen.
25 He was nearly hospitalized when he was one and half

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2 years old with pneumonia and he was also nearly
3 hospitalized when he was eight with the flu. Uhm,
4 for which he was vaccinated. He could not breath and
5 the rescue inhaler was not helping.

6 So, thankfully prednisone and Tamiflu did.
7 Anyway, uhm, but because of his health issues, he
8 joined 700,000 other students last year in remote
9 learning. He also has ADHD and anxiety for which he
10 has an IEP and he received full services uhm, while
11 he was remote. And he finished the past school year
12 with better grades than he has ever received in his
13 entire student hood. He has exceeded standards in
14 nearly every subject and he has finished reading two
15 grades ahead of his peers.

16 I don't know what I'm going to do come September
17 13th. So sorry but I do know that I will not be
18 sending him in person. Asthma is not listed as one
19 of the medical conditions that was released in the
20 DOE handbook the other day. Uhm, and even so, uh,
21 home instruction is only five hours a week, which to
22 me is not an education, that's tutoring. So, I've
23 been focused every day instead for the past two
24 months on speaking to city officials and trying to
25 get the attention of the school leadership about the

1
2 why – to find out why isn't the remote option being
3 offered? I have been working with other parents
4 across the city to try to stop and mitigate this fast
5 approaching health crisis and I've given public
6 comments to the DOE at the PPE meeting two weeks ago.

7 I've spoken with the media. Uhm, and along with
8 the Bronx parent leaders advocacy group that I've
9 been working with, I've provided ample testimony as
10 to why the remote learning option must be provided.

11 The only thing I haven't done is hear a single
12 compelling reason as to why in-person learning is the
13 only option for my son right now. I have heard the
14 Mayor and the Chancellor say that in-person learning
15 is the best but I've got four years of report cards
16 that say otherwise. I've heard that children need to
17 be in the classroom with their friends and a teacher.
18 That's fair but my son repeatedly said during remote
19 learning that he felt like the teacher was talking
20 directly to him and he felt more connected with her.

21 We've kept him in constant touch with his friends
22 via outdoor playdates or roadblocks or mind craft.
23 We have the technology right. I've heard the Mayor
24 and Chancellor say that the schools are the safest
25 but they are relying on pre-Delta data. And when

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2 only 350,000 students were actually in-person. So,
3 it's easy to say that.

4 Uhm, so I get to hear a single compelling reason.
5 I keep asking why? Why can't you offer parents like
6 me this remote option and you know, when you ask
7 someone to put their life on the line, you need to
8 have at least one compelling reason. You know, when
9 you have people like firefighters and police officers
10 and military personnel, you have a compelling reason.
11 One, it's their job. They are being paid. Two,
12 there might be a person in a burning building.
13 Three, someone might be in a line of fire. Four,
14 there's an enemy force, whatever. But none of these
15 things are ten-year-old child, right?

16 So, there is no compelling reason for my child or
17 any unvaccinated child like him under the age of 12
18 to be forced to learn in-person in an overcrowded
19 classroom with questionable non-HEPA ventilation,
20 especially when he is at risk to infection and
21 hospitalization and possibly even death.

22 Please use every resource in your power. I know
23 you are and I really appreciate it. Uhm, to stop the
24 Mayor and the DOE from not offering remote and making
25 us choose between our child's life or their

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2 education. Because parents like me are going to
3 choose their kid every single time. But then, I'm
4 going to look into suing the DOE and the city for a
5 504 violation. Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: I want to thank you and if
7 you can, maybe after this hearing, if you can email
8 me your contact information with your child. I would
9 like to follow-up to see what could be done here.
10 So, please send me that information and thank you.

11 JENNIFER GODARD: Absolutely.

12 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: I appreciate you. Thank
13 you so much. Yes.

14 MICHAEL HORWITZ: Thank you Chair Treyger and
15 Chair Levine for holding these important hearings
16 today. My name is Michael Horwitz and I am
17 testifying on behalf of Class Size Matters.

18 The DOE's school reopening plan has many
19 weaknesses. First, and perhaps most aggressively the
20 DOE refused to allocate a single penny of the
21 additional \$8 billion in federal and state education
22 funds to lower class size despite the City Council's
23 dedicated advocacy during budget negotiations and
24 despite the DOE's own survey's finding smaller class
25 sizes are the top priority of parents.

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2 Lowering class size would ensure a safer and more
3 supportive environment for New York City students
4 particularly during this pandemic given the need for
5 social distancing. Instead of the \$250 million the
6 Council has proposed for this purpose, the DOE
7 allocated only \$18 million for a small program for
8 only 72 elementary schools and has encouraged them to
9 hire push in teachers instead of actually lowering
10 class size.

11 This will actually lead to more classroom
12 overcrowding and an even more unsafe environment.
13 Not a single penny of the additional state foundation
14 funds is specifically allocated for smaller class
15 sizes even though these funds resulted from the
16 Campaign for Fiscal Equity and Lawsuit, in which
17 excessive class sizes led New York's highest court to
18 conclude New York City children were denied their
19 right to the sound of basic education required under
20 the state's constitution.

21 Class Size Matters would also like to add our
22 support to the many parent groups, elected officials,
23 organizations and this person sitting next to me who
24 are clamoring for a remote option for New York City
25 students as most other large school districts have

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2 offered. Among other reasons the three feet of
3 social distancing that the DOE has promised will be
4 provide and most schools will not be feasible unless
5 many schools choose not to attend in-person.

6 Originally the DOE stated roughly 80 schools
7 would not be able to achieve social distancing. The
8 DOE then altered the formula they used by dividing
9 classroom space by 20 square feet per student rather
10 than 25, as they had originally done. Their
11 spreadsheets also assume principals offices and other
12 administrative spaces will be used for classrooms
13 which seems highly unrealistic.

14 They now claim only about 50 schools will not be
15 able to achieve social distancing but refuse to
16 release that list of schools or say what these
17 schools will do instead. Last week, the DOE released
18 its health and safety protocols for reopening schools
19 in September, which included mandatory masks,
20 vaccination for all school staff and social
21 distancing if possible. The DOE claimed that every
22 classroom across New York City will have been
23 provided with two HEPA purifiers but there is a
24 dispute as to whether this is actually true.
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2 But the biggest disappointment is the laxity of
3 the DOE's COVID testing plan. Only ten percent have
4 unvaccinated students who have submitted consent will
5 be tested every two weeks. Despite the fact that
6 Delta is far more transmissible and there will be
7 over crowding and less social distancing this year,
8 this represents a sharp decrease in COVID testing
9 compared to last year when 20 percent of students
10 were tested weekly.

11 For those who might argue that weekly testing of
12 all students and staff is too expensive, Los Angeles
13 expects FEMA to pay for most of their testing
14 program. And indeed as a recent fact sheet
15 explained, the federal government will entirely cover
16 the cost of staffing and COVID testing for any school
17 district. Thus it is entirely unacceptable that
18 fewer than ten percent of New York City students will
19 be tested only once every two weeks given that no
20 vaccinated students will be tested and some families
21 may not provide consent for the others.

22 Today, the DOE argued other layers of their plan
23 will compensate for plan reductions in testing but
24 there is no reason the existence of these other
25 layers precludes the possibility or benefits of also

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2 maintaining more testing. Especially with
3 overcrowding undermining safety.

4 Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

5 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you and thank you for
6 your very important uh, uh, testimony on items that
7 we actually shared a lot of common ground on and I
8 thing we certainly raised many of the similar
9 concerns with regards to the testing plan. The
10 ironies between last years testing plan being
11 actually stronger in this and the Chair pointed that
12 out as well and the information guides. You heard
13 today, at this hour, many principals do not know who
14 their school is vaccinated or not. Many families
15 don't know that there is a portal that they can log
16 onto to fill out if their child got a vaccine. Many
17 folks didn't know about it. Uhm, but yet, a lot of
18 the decisions in terms of testing and quarantine
19 center around vaccination status.

20 So, uh, we have a lot of work to do and again,
21 it's falling on school communities to put this
22 together but I really, really appreciate this.
23 Malcolm is this the final? Did Gregory, yes. I
24 think, yes.

25 GREGORY BRENDER: Yeah, I went.

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CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Yes, I just want to conclude and I'll turn it over to my Co-Chair for remarks as well. Uh, today, I didn't wear just my hat as a Council Member as an Education Chair, I really do look at things in education through the lens of an educator and my colleague was a teacher as well. It's about the kids. It's about our communities, our educators, that's first and foremost. Uhm, President Obama once stated, we can disagree without being disagreeable and we all, and there's an enlightenment philosopher that said, you know, I might disagree with what you say but I will defend your right to say it.

What transpired earlier was not just about folks disagreeing, it was folks trying to absolutely shut down and disrupt a critical public hearing and we're in the people's house. We have an obligation to first of all keep people safe. The incredible hardworking staff here that works in the Council, our Council colleagues, we have an obligation to keep everyone safe. A safe, respectful supportive environment. The shouting down, the cursing, the intimidation against members of this body, the staff, the Chancellor, the Health Commissioner and their

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2 staff that's unacceptable. It's like the first time
3 in my Council tenure where I have had to actually ask
4 the Sergeant at Arms to clear out the room. This is
5 not something that members enjoy. We have an
6 obligation to keep folks safe. To have a respectful
7 chamber in this people's house. We can disagree but
8 we don't have to be disagreeable and this is
9 important information. A lot of parents, educators,
10 are watching the hearing waiting for transcript to
11 get critical information that many still don't have.
12 They rely on this to get information out. That's the
13 power of oversight hearings. To get as much
14 information out to the public.

15 Today, we learned some very important things.
16 There is still more work to do but today, we learned
17 that elementary school children for the first time I
18 heard, if they have to quarantine, there will be live
19 instruction. For many families, that was the
20 question they asked me. Today, we heard on the
21 record that the DOE will work on a plan to provide
22 food access and meals to kids who quarantine because
23 many of our kids and families rely on school meals
24 for nourishment. That tells me that there wasn't
25 really much of a plan before the power of oversight,

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2 asking questions, the Chair pressed on about the
3 testing plan needing to be stronger. Particularly
4 with the Delta variant being more contagious.

5 So, that's why we're here to get keep kids safe,
6 school communities safe, to get the public informed
7 to do our job. To hold the administration
8 accountable but what transpired here earlier today
9 was completely disrespectful, unacceptable and not
10 safe. And that's why there is zero tolerance for it.
11 I want to thank the Sergeant at Arms and the entire
12 security team. [Applause] I want to thank you for
13 your work and for your service for keeping us safe
14 and also for your safety. I want to thank the
15 amazing City Council staff for their incredible work
16 as well. [APPLAUSE]

17 And with that, I conclude my portion. I thank
18 everyone who came out to testify and to really just
19 to keep our communities informed to the best of our
20 ability and now to that, I turn to my Co-Chair the
21 one and only, Chair Mark Levine.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: Thank you Chair Treyger,
23 well you said it so powerfully and eloquently, so I
24 don't need to add much. I, I am really grateful that
25 we had the opportunity to hold this hearing. I'm

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2 grateful for your leadership today and always. Mr.
3 Chair, there was important information that needed to
4 get out. That now is in the public sphere. We have
5 to do more work to make sure that it reaches the ears
6 of every parent and every staff member and we have
7 more work to do collectively to keep our city safe,
8 our school safe, our kids safe. And it's unfortunate
9 that there was an attempt to derail this hearing by
10 people who are pushing policies which will
11 demonstratively harm our kids. But I'm proud that
12 every member of this Council, every member of the
13 administration has stood united in defense of masking
14 and vaccination because these measure save lives.
15 Tht is our take away. Thank you very much and thank
16 you Mr. Chair.

17 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you. And with that,
18 this hearing is adjourned. [GAVEL]

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C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date September 10, 2021