CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
JOINTLY WITH THE
COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

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October 16, 2020
Start: 10:18 a.m.
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HELD AT: Remote Hearing

BEFORE:

Mark Treyger
CHAIRPERSON

Mark Levine
CHAIRPERSON

COUNCIL MEMBERS:
Alicka Ampry-Samuel
Inez Barron
Ben Kallos
Ydanis Rodriguez
Rafael Salamanca Jr.
Barry Grodenchik
Daniel Dromm
I. Daneek Miller
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Farah N. Louis
Deborah Rose
Joseph C. Borelli
Andrew Cohen
Mathieu Eugene
Robert Holden
Keith Powers
Richard Carranza, Chancellor  
Department of Education

Dr. Jay Varma, Senior Advisor for Public Health  
Mayor’s Office

Dr. Daniel Stephens, Deputy Commissioner of Family and Child Health  
DOHMH

Chelsea Cipriano, Executive Director  
Intergovernmental Affairs, DOHMH

Dr. Ted Long, Executive Director  
New York City Test and Trace Corps  
Senior Vice President of Ambulatory Care  
New York City Health and Hospitals

Maidel de la Cruz, Director Government and Community Affairs  
New York City Health and Hospitals

Susan Haskell, Deputy Commissioner of Youth Services  
DYCD

Donald Conyers, First Deputy Chancellor  
LaShawn Robinson, Deputy Chancellor  
Josh Wallack, Deputy Chancellor  
Lauren Siciliano, Chief Administrative Officer  
Department of Education

Lindsay Oates, Chief Financial Officer  
Department of Education
Kevin Moran, Chief School Operations Officer

Dr. Linda Chen, Chief Academic Officer

Carrie Bateman, Chief Operating Officer
Division of School Planning and Development

John Shae, Chief Executive Officer
Department of Education

Kenyati Reed, Executive Director
Office of Safety and Youth Development

Christopher Caruso, Executive Director for Community Schools

Chris Groll, Chief Executive Officer
Division of School Climate and Wellness

Eadie Sharp, Chief Strategy Officer

John Hammer, Deputy Chief Executive Officer
and Director Special Education Office

Michael Mulgrew, President
UFT

Tajh Sutton, New York City Resident

Randy Levine, Policy Director
Advocates for the Children of New York

Andrew Ortiz, Manager of Educational Policy
New York Immigration Coalition

Hallie Yee, Policy Coordinator
Coalition for Asian-American Children and Families

Lisa Caswell, Senior Policy Analyst
Daycare Council of New York
Leonie Haimson, Executive Director
Class Size Matters

Paul Scialla, Founder International Well
Building Institute
Founder and CEO, Delos

Quadira Coles, Policy Manager
GGE

Toni Smith Thompson, Senior Organizer in
Education Policy Center
New York Civil Liberties Union

Krystal Vazquez, on behalf of Lenny Goldberg
Opportunity Charter Schools

Dr. Thomas Howard, Executive Director
Bronx Charter for Better Learning

Daryl Hornick Becker, Policy Associate
Assistance Committee for Children of New York

Gregory Brender
United Neighborhood Houses

Valone Brown Jr., Director
Learn to Work

Paulette Healy, Council member
Citywide Council on Special Education

Phil Wong, President
Community Education Council 24

Mary Chen, Director
Chinese American Planning Council
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JOHANNA CASTRO: Sergeant Leonardo, we are live.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Great. Sergeants, can you please begin your recording?

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Recording is up.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Recording is rolling.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Recording to the cloud is ready to go.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Thank you. Sergeant Kotowski, we are ready for your opening.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Good morning and welcome to today’s remote New York City Council hearing of the Committee on Education jointly with the Committee on Health. At this time, would Council staff please turn on their video? Please place electronic devices on vibrate or silent. If you wish to submit testimony, you may do so at testimony@council.NYC.gov. That is testimony@council.NYC.gov. thank you. We are ready to begin.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Okay.

[gavel]
CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Good morning and welcome to today’s virtual hearing. I am Council member Mark Treyger, Chair of the Education Committee. I’d like to thank my colleague, Mark Levine, Chair of the Health Committee, for holding this critically important joint hearing. I also want to acknowledge and thank the presence of our Speaker Corey Johnson for his support in being here today, as well as Public Advocate Jumaane Williams. Today’s oversight topic is reopening New York City public schools, health and safety. There are also two bills that the Education Committee will hear. Introduction number 2058 by the Public Advocate which would require the DOE to report student attendance during periods of remote learning and a bill that I sponsored, Introduction number 2104 which would require the DOE to report on certain metrics regarding remote learning. While scheduling this hearing has had some hiccups, I welcome the Chancellor and his senior leadership team here today to what is happening around the reopening of New York City schools and to answer questions and bring transparency and oversight on critical issues surrounding health and safety of our students, our
educators, and all of our staff. I understand how busy the Chancellor and his team have been particularly since March. The hours and hard work folks have put it would test anyone’s metal. I appreciate the Herculean task the department has and continues to have as this pandemic continues to impact our city. That being said, we do not have city Council oversight hearings as a frivolous or political exercise. Despite everything going on around us, I want to make it crystal clear to City Hall that legislative oversight is a sacrosanct responsibility of this body and it is not optional. Oversight hearings provide this committee and the Council as a whole, the opportunity to inspect, examine, review, and act as a check on the executive branch and its agencies. That is why we are here on a Friday morning. COVID-19 has presented challenges to this city unlike any other we have faced in decades. COVID-19 affects every single resident in this city and affects the educational outcomes of all of the city students whether they be in public, private, or religious institutions. In the best of times, the DOE’s ability to deliver educational services to 1.1 million students, all with diverse
needs, is challenging enough. In the midst of a pandemic, that mission becomes even more formidable. Between now and December, the Committee on Education will focus its oversight responsibilities on various aspects of education in New York City as it currently stands affected by the pandemic, including its impact on students with disabilities next Friday. I expect this administration and the DOE to be present, provide information on the current state of affairs, challenges faced, and steps to be taken to meet those challenges had on. I expected this administration and the DOE to be ready and able to answer fully questions raised by this committee and when information is sought outside of an oversight hearing, that the department respond in a timely manner to all committee requests for information. This includes request for information on the administrations. It should not take this committee months to receive briefings are confirmation of what the administration is considering when we are constantly receiving reports from CBL providers who are being told that their funding, including community schools and the vital Learning to Work program is being gutted and that there are
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operational concerns with the learning labs and bridges programs hindering working families ability to access critical childcare. All the while, we are learning about the plan to acquire a school bus company at great, but unspecified cost through the media. This is not a functional way to govern. I do want to acknowledge that there are many individuals who have worked collaboratively and quickly to brief this Committee and answer its questions outside of the context of an oversight hearing and I thank them for their partnership, although, we still need a lot more information than we have right now. Ultimately, we all have the same goal. That the city’s 1.1 million students can attend school in a safe, supportive, and academically rewarding environment. We can achieve this goal when we work collaboratively, rather than in opposition. I will briefly talk about Introduction number 2104. This bill would require DOE to report on metrics regarding remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. These metrics would include language access and support provided, learning engagement rates, information on the level of remote learning students in juvenile facilities that receive IEP compliance rates, and a
host of other metrics. Much of what is covered by this bill was included in a follow-up letter to the DOE following our first remote hearing back in May. We never received the data that we asked for, despite extending the deadline. We, therefore, had to resort to using Council subpoena power to compel the Department to immediately get us as much of the information, but we are still moving forward with the legislation to fully capture all the data that we have requested. It is outrageous that the de Blasio administration and instead meet the efforts of this body and its request for information that would shine a light on the city’s efforts in delivering remote education to 1.1 million students. The New York State Education Department sums up perfectly why this committee, through its oversight function, is seeking this data. Quote, data collection for continuous improvement and reflection means data is used to understand what is happening, to identify challenges or roadblocks, and to figure out what is working. Districts must assess immediate needs, but recognize the need to continue to reassess regularly as circumstances are likely to change frequently in this tumultuous time. Continuing to collect data to
ensure accurate understandings of need is necessary to continue providing the most effective and efficient response, end quote. I look forward to advancing this legislation and identifying gaps in services and working with the Department and our community of advocates and CPR was to plug those gaps and ensure those students are receiving the free and appropriate education they are entitled to under law, whether they are learning remotely, in person, in a juvenile facility, or with disabilities. We can and we must do everything possible to meet student needs and provide a quality education to all. Finally, with respect to doing everything possible to meet student needs, I want to add-- and I want to really emphasize this. I want to add that school leaders and school staff, from teachers to maintenance to school food workers, they are the ones who operationalize every single change in guidance. They are the ones who are ultimately responsible to implement every change that City Hall announces on TV and social media. They are the ones who hear directly from the parents and how our parents and students supposed to feel when conflicting guidance is passed down by the state and city? Absolute
confusion, frustration, and anger. I want to recognize all of our school leaders and all of our school staff for their extraordinary front-line work they do every day. And I want to recognize and acknowledge the daily struggle that parents and students face trying to navigate the ever constant changes to our school system. I want to thank everyone who is testifying today and I want to thank the Council staff for all the work that they have been putting in for this hearing. Malcolm Buterhorn, Jan Atwell, Colima Johnson, Chelsea Badermore, Masis Sarkisian, Melissa Nunez, Rose Martinez. I want to thank my chief of staff who is working extremely hard, Anna Scafe and my policy director Vanessa Ogle. And I want to recognize colleagues who are present. We have Council member Kallos, Council member Lander, Council member Levin, Council member Rose, Council member Grodenchik, Council member Ampry-Samuel, Council member Brannan, Council member Louis, Council member Ulrich, Council member Holden, Council member Powers, Council member Eugene, Council member Cohen, and Council member Borelli. And I will now turn it over to my co-chair and my great colleague who is
doing extraordinary work, Chair Mark Levine of the Health Committee.

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Thank you so much, Mr. Chair, and good morning, everybody. I’m Mark Levine, the city Council member and Chair of the Councils Committee on Health and I am thrilled to be partnering today with Chair Mark Treyger and to have our Speaker Cora Johnson with us, as well, who we will be hearing from momentarily. As we begin this hearing of two critical committees, education and health, examining the safety of our school reopening process and demanding accountability on behalf of students and staff. As a DOE parent and as someone who started his career as a teacher in district 7, I fully understand the stakes with the imperative that we only keep schools open amidst this pandemic if we can sufficiently safeguard the health of students, families, teachers, and staff. This hearing takes on an added urgency at a moment when we are confronting a rising wave of coronavirus nationally and here in New York City, a trend that may well further accelerate as the weather gets colder and gatherings are pushed indoors. We need to examine the health data, not just in the so-called hotspots of Brooklyn
and Queens, but in neighborhoods around the five boroughs where the daily case numbers are indeed, unfortunately, now increasing again. Are we succeeding in implementing promised protocols for testing students and staff in our school buildings? What are the results telling us so far about the prevalence of the virus in our schools? What is the system, for the critical work of contract tracing and school communities? What is this telling us about transmission in school buildings? And what has this meant for the opening and closing of individual schools? What protocols are in place to maintain safety if a student or staff member starts to exhibit COVID symptoms during the school day? Do we, indeed, have adequate staffing at every school amidst this public health crisis? What is the criteria for closing clusters of schools in additional individual neighborhoods as cases spike locally for a disease which is increasingly understood to be airborne? What do we know about the state of ventilation in our classrooms and other spaces? Including the key metric of air exchange rates per hour. What about learning bridge sites? Are we applying the same testing, tracing, ventilation, and closing protocols
there? Parents and families have endured months of anxiety, confusion, and uncertainty throughout this process and they deserve answers to these critical questions. Teachers, principals, and school staff have worked with unprecedented intensity throughout this crisis amidst the most difficult and even chaotic circumstances. I am full of admiration and gratitude for your hard work, your dedication, and your sacrifice and you, too, deserve answers to these critical questions. New Yorkers need clarity. We need information based on the science. The city Council called for and demanded this hearing today to get those answers and I want to thank the city Council staff who have worked incredibly hard to prepare us for today’s hearing, including on the Health Committee counsels Harbani Ahuja and Sara Liss, policy analyst Emily Balken, finance analyst Lauren Hunt, and on our data team, Rachel Alexandroff, Rose Martinez, Melissa Nunez, Mesa Sarkisian, and Julia Freedenberg. I want to quickly acknowledge other members of the Health Committee who are with us. Forgive me if you’ve already acknowledged them, Chair Treyger, but we have Council member Powers, Council member Barron, I believe
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Council member Cohen. And forgive me if I’ve missed others. We will circle back and announce them. Now I believe I am passing it off to our Council Speaker Cora Johnson for opening remarks.

SPEAKER JOHNSON: Thank you to Chairs Treyger and Levine for holding this hearing today and for everything both of you have done for parents, teachers, students, and school employees in our city with all your advocacy, with all your persistence. Countless New Yorkers would be in the dark right now about so many of the critical issues facing our lives. When Chair Treyger came to me a few weeks ago to say that we still didn’t know about spring attendance under remote learning, I was, frankly, astonished. This is some of the most basic information that we could ask for and we don’t take issue a subpoena lightly. It needs to be a last resort for essential information, but that is the kind of position that we have been put in. I think I speak for a lot of New Yorkers and I know I speak for Chairs Treyger and Levine when I say that that chaos and dysfunction that has surrounded our education system in the past year has been hard to watch and, frankly, heartbreaking. And it is not on one person.
This is not about—I actually like Chancellor Carranza very much, so it’s not about blaming this on one person. It’s about what the city is facing right now and how difficult it has been. But I want to be clear that the stress and the frustration that we are feeling is nothing compared to the stress, frustration, and anxiety that parents, students, teachers, and school staff have been dealing with almost every day since this pandemic hit. They are trying to make decisions about their education, their future, their health with little to no information and with the rules of the game sometimes changing day to day. I know everyone at the Department of Education has been operating under incredible pressure and what is probably the most uncertain climate of our lifetime. And I want to thank them for their hard work. But I also want to say that the city has deserved better. Literally, millions of New Yorkers have been impacted by these decisions and it’s not just the students and parents and school employees, but every business that employs a parent in New York City. Getting this right is a linchpin of our recovery. Jobs are at stake. Lives are at stake. And that the future of our children is at
stake. I know that it has been incredibly difficult, as I said, but excuses aren’t really helpful or acceptable. We cannot afford to let the disparities we have seen from this virus grow. We can’t lose the progress we have made in keeping our positive cases and deaths down. I really believe that it can all come down to how we handle this challenge.

Chancellor Carranza, I know scheduling this hearing has been difficult for you, but, frankly, the as you heard from Chair Treyger, this should have happened sooner. We are really glad you are with us today because we look forward to hearing from you directly. We can’t do our job properly without it and everyone impacted by our school system deserves to get answers to some of the questions that we have today. We need to know what is working. We need to know what is not working, but why this reopening process was so fraught and how the DOE plans to make sure that the 1.1 million students in New York City get the education they deserve whether we are able to keep schools open all year or not. We still want children to get that education. So, I want to thank you for being here today and now I’m going to turn it back over to Chair Treyger.
CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker and thank you for your support. It means a lot to get this information and to really put the Council oversight power to use. Now, I will turn it over to another big supporter and another great ally in our fight for our kids. Our Public Advocate Jumaane Williams.

PUBLIC ADVOCATE WILLIAMS: Can you hear me? No? Can anyone hear me?

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: You are unmuted, but we can’t hear you.

PUBLIC ADVOCATE WILLIAMS: Can anybody hear me?

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: There we go. Now we can.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Better.

PUBLIC ADVOCATE WILLIAMS: You can hear me now?

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes.

PUBLIC ADVOCATE WILLIAMS: Okay. Thank you. Thank you so much. As was mentioned, my name is Jumaane Williams. I’m the Public Advocate for the city of New York. I want to thank Chairs Treyger and Levine for not only holding this important hearing,
but for the stalwart leadership you both shown throughout this pandemic and I want to thank the Speaker for his leadership and I think the Council for allowing me to speak on this important topic. At first, I do want to say and echo that I understand the challenges of trying to educate 1.1 million students, the largest school system in the entire country, and I would very much appreciate that the Chancellor himself and his staff have always availed themselves to me and to answer questions, which I appreciate. And I want to make sure that I said about the outset. I do have to say that looking at the decisions that we could have made, I always try to look at the tools at the moment and that decision cannot [inaudible 00:20:35]. We have done abysmal when it comes to reopening these schools. There just is no way around it. We could have done things so much different and we made the choices we had, the choices that we did with the resources we had. We couldn’t have done it worse. I also want to be clear that, when I take a birds eye view and I look at the Department of Education, the NYPD, the Human Resources Administration, I cannot put it all on the heads of those agencies. I do want to tweet what the
speaker said a little bit. I do put the blame on one person. Mayor Bill de Blasio. The incompetency in decision-making is bar none from what I’ve seen for certain decisions, especially around reopening. No one except for the Mayor and maybe a few others believe that it made sense to try to reopen in person for the largest school system in the country. Nothing that has happened was not anticipated and we went like a steam train to keep going and the people affected are the people who are most affected throughout this pandemic and even before. There was a word I’m going to use that I heard a lot when I was a young kid which is hardheaded. It appears that the administration and the Mayor has just been hardheaded from people who are on the ground and are saying what needs to be done. Last month, the Media delayed the start of an in-person instruction on two different occasions. Eventually, schools of grade K through five and K through eight reopened at the end of September and high schools and middle schools with grade six through eight opened on October 1st. While this continuous display of a lack of coordination and organization on the part of the administration is disappointing, it’s not surprising. What is
surprising is that Mayor’s decision to delay the reopening for the second time in his reason for doing so. Many schools did not have enough staff members to supervise the number of students who were about to enter the buildings for in person learning. It is inconceivable that the Mayor could have arrived at this decision in September when his own education sector advisory Council, a group made up of members he himself appointed, warned him of the teacher shortage four months prior. The Administration knew that this was going to happen, so they have no excuse, not, for being this unprepared and ill-equipped. I am not the only person who has no confidence in this administration’s ability to reopen schools in a safe and sound manner. A couple of days before schools reopened, the union representing our cities principal called on the state to seize control of the school system from the Mayor. While I do not think we have reached a point where we need to cede control of our schools to the state Department of Education, I understand the frustrations of these principles and I sympathize with them and do wish the leadership of the UFT has made similarly strong comments. They have not been provided with enough
resources, guidance, and staff to ensure a safe environment for in person learning. One example is the fact that the administration and added 4500 educators a week before reopening when the principles union said they needed twice that amount to function. It is clear that we cannot rely on the administration to provide adequate direction and support for our school staff. As of now, remote learning remains our best option for school-based instruction while we continue to open up in a phased approach. And while last spring showed us the many shortcomings of the DOE and how it handled remote learning. My bill, Intro number 2058, would attempt to address one of those issues. Student engagement. Student engagement remains a problem because the DOE has still not provided every single student with a remote learning device. Providing devices to every student would not only benefit our efforts to close the digital divide in our city, but it would bring our student engagement rate closer to where it was pre-COVID. Monitoring student engagement is an essential way to determine the effectiveness of remote learning which is why I introduced this piece of legislation. This legislation will require the DOE to report
student attendance for the previous week when remote
learning utilized or when a combination of remote and
in person learning is utilized. The data will be
disaggregated by school, school district, grade,
race, individualized education plan status,
multilingual language learner’s status, and the
English language learner status. The report is to be
submitted to the Mayor, Speaker of the Council,
myself as the Public Advocate, the school diversity
advisory group, all community education councils, and
posted on the DOE website. And we also need to
address the fact that everyone doesn’t have the
Internet services needed. Tracking student
attendance rates allows us to hold the DOE
accountable for ensuring our students have the
ability to access all of their classes remotely. I
was looking at Chair Treyger’s New York one when we
finally got some good data that he was asking for a
while and what we figured is what we saw. The vast
majority of people who are affected are black and
brown. Schools that have over 50 percent black and
brown students are eight times-- eight times--
doing worse. This is unacceptable. Can we imagine
all of the energy and the money that we wasted doing
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something that everybody told this Mayor we cannot
and should not do? Put it into getting the best
remote system we could’ve and then phased in. it is
inconceivable that this is the decision that the
mayor made. I also want to take a moment to
highlight the importance of Chair Treyger’s bill.
Intro number 1650 which would require the DOE to
report data to the Counsel concerning teacher
retention and [inaudible 00:26:05]. At a time when
our school system is experiencing a teacher shortage,
this legislation is essential. Perhaps, what is most
important about this bill is its tax [inaudible
00:26:14] provision which comprises a group to
analyze the DOE’s data and provide recommendations to
address the issue. I hope that the DOE will actually
utilize the recommendations issued by this taskforce.
Something that they clearly did not do with our
Mayor’s advisory group, to take substantial steps to
retain the educators and provide them with the tools
needed to navigate the tumultuous period. While I’m
glad to see New York working towards recovery after
having been the epicenter of COVID-19, we must not
use our city’s low infection rate at a telltale sign
that we can safely reopen schools. The money and
energy that the administration is investing in this hybrid approach will be better spent towards improving remote learning with a phased in method coming at a later date when our schools have more staff, a standard universal guidance, and additional resources. Reopening our school buildings before our educators were adequately prepared has been a disservice to our students, to the parents, to the entire city. Once again, I urge the administration to focus on remote learning and delay in person learning until our schools are ready. And once again, I just want to thank the Chancellor and the staff of the DOE who I know have the best of intentions who I know are doing the best given the circumstances that we have. But as the Public Advocate, as a person with a child in the public school system, I know we made terrible decision unnecessarily. There has to be an account for that and we have to do better going forward. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you, Mr. Public Advocate, for your support and being very vocal from day one on this issue. I appreciate your partnership. And with that, Malcolm, we’ll swear in the Chancellor and the panel.
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COMMITTEE COUNCIL: Yes. So, thank you, Chair Treyger. Again, everyone, I am Malcolm Buterhorn, counsel to the Education Committee of the New York City Council. I am also joined today by my colleague, Sara Liss, counsel to the Health Committee. Before we begin testimony from the administration, I want to remind everyone that you will be on mute until you are called on to testify. After you are called on, you will be unmuted. I will be calling on public witness as to testify in panels, so please listen for your name to be called. I will be announcing in advance to the next panel will be. I would like to remind everyone that, unlike our typical Council hearings, while you will be placed on a panel, I will be calling individuals to testify one at a time. Council members who have questions for a particular panelist or for the administration should use the raise hand function in zoom. You will be called on in the order with which you raised your hand after full testimony has been completed. We will be limiting Council member questions to five minutes. This includes both questions and answers. Please note that, for purposes of this virtual hearing, we will not be allowing a second round of
For panelists, once your name is called, member of our staff will unmute you and the Sergeant-at-arms will give you the go ahead to begin after setting the timer. Please listen for that cue. All public testimony will be limited to two minutes. At the end of two minutes, please wrap up your comments so we can move on to the next panelist. Please listen carefully and wait for the Sergeant to announce that you may begin before delivering your testimony as there is a slight delay. I will now call on the following members of the administration to testify. Understanding that the Chancellor will be the only one giving verbal testimony, there is a full backup contingent of DOE cabinet members, DOHMH, DYCD, and Test and Trace. So, I am going to announce everyone that I have on this list, then I will read the oath and call on each of you individually to respond. So, the following person will be sworn in. Chancellor Richard Carranza. Dr. Jay Varma, senior advisor for public health, Mayor’s Office. Dr. Daniel Stephens, deputy commissioner of family and child health, DOHMH. Chelsea Cipriano, executive director intergovernmental affairs, DOHMH. Dr. Ted Long, executive director, New York City Test and
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Trace Corps. And senior vice president of ambulatory care, New York City Health and Hospitals. Maidel de la Cruz, director government and community affairs, New York City Health and Hospitals. Susan Haskell, deputy commissioner of youth services, DYCD. First deputy chancellor, Donald Conyers. Deputy chancellor, LaShawn Robinson. Deputy chancellor, Josh Wallack. Lauren Siciliano, DOE chief administrative officer. Lindsay Oates, DOE chief financial officer. Kevin Moran, chief school operations officer. Dr. Linda Chen, chief academic officer. Carrie Bateman, chief operating officer, Division of School Planning and Development. John Shay, DOE chief executive officer. Kenyati Reed, DOE executive director, officer of safety and youth development. Christopher Caruso, executive director for community schools. Chris Groll, chief executive officer, Division of School Climate and Wellness. Eadie Sharp, DOE chief strategy officer. And John Hammer, deputy chief executive officer and director special education office. If I just called your name, if you could please activate your video now. Again, I will read the oath and then call on each panelist to individually respond. If you could all
raise your right hand. Do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth before these committees and respond honestly to Council member questions? Chancellor?

CHANCELLOR CARRANZA? I do.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Dr. Varma?

DR. JAY VARMA: I do.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Dr. Daniel Stephens?

DR. DANIEL STEPHENS: I do.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Chelsea Cipriano?

DR. DANIEL STEPHENS: She’s off camera.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: All right. I can circle back. Dr. Long?

DR. TED LONG: I do.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Dr. Maidel de la Cruz. We can circle back if she does answer questions later. Deputy Commissioner Haskell?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HASKELL: I do.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: First deputy chancellor Conyers?

FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR CONYERS: I do.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Deputy Chancellor Robinson?
DEPUTY CHANCELLOR ROBINSON: Yes. I do.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Deputy Chancellor Wallack?

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WALLACK: I do.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Lauren Siciliano?

LAUREN SICILIANO: I do.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Lindsay Oates?

LINDSAY OATES: I do.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Kevin Moran? I saw him before. I can circle back. Dr. Chen?

DR. LINDA CHEN: I do.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Carrie Bateman?

CARRIE BATEMAN: I do.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: John Shay?

JOHN SHAY: I do.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Kenyati Reed?


JOHN HAMMER: I do.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. And for those that didn’t speak before, if you do answer questions for the first time, later, we will just do the oath for you. Finally, for question time, due to the large number of administration officials present,
any panelist that will be answering questions after
the Chancellor’s testimony, if you could please state
your name for the record before you speak, it will
make it much more clear in the official transcript
for who was speaking. Thank you. And, Chancellor,
you may begin when ready.

CHANCELLOR CARRANZA: Great. Thank you.

So good morning and I’d like to thank Chairs Treyger
and Levine, all of the members of the Education and
Health Committee that are here today, as well as our
Public Advocate Jumaane Williams and our Speaker Cory
Johnson. Thank you for the opportunity to discuss
the Department of Education’s reopening plans as they
relate to health and safety. As chancellor of the
New York City Public Schools, I am joined by senior
advisor for public health, Dr. Jay Varma, Department
of Health Deputy Commissioner Dr. Daniel Stephens,
and Dr. Ted Long from the Test and Trace Corps, as
well as Deputy Commissioner Susan Haskell from the
Department of youth services and community
development, as well as all of my colleagues from the
Department of Education. Before I begin, I first
would like to thank the Counsel for your continued
leadership through this pandemic and all that you
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have done on behalf of New York City during this time. The unprecedented nature of this pandemic has challenged our system in countless ways and, in collaboration with our public health experts, our educators and families, we have made the most out of a nearly impossible situation to get our students and educators safely back into the classroom. Reopening our school buildings during an ongoing pandemic has been one of the most complex challenges in any jurisdiction has confronted in modern history. So many aspects of this experience have been unprecedented, but the fundamentals remain the same. Our students want and need to learn in person with a caring teacher as often as possible and ensuring their health and safety is central to everything we have done to make that happen. Since September 21, I have had the privilege of visiting many of our schools in all five boroughs as they welcome back our students. Seeing the faces of our students light up when they are reunited with their peers and teachers and principals was a joyous experience and reinforced how essential it is to nurture the closest possible connections between students and their school communities. I want to emphasize how crucial
physically attending school is, especially for our most vulnerable children. For many, the school community is the stickiest, most reliable aspect of their lives with people and resources that they can count on. I cannot thank you enough our teachers and our principals, our school staff, our borough staff, and our food service workers. Our custodial engineers, nurses whose dedication to our students is apparent in the heroic work that they have done during this crisis. Everyone else that supports our schools also deserves credit, the enormous credit, including our school safety agents and our bus drivers and our school support staff. Throughout the reopening process, we have taken swift and decisive action to protect the health and safety of our students and staff. For example, we have granted reasonable accommodations to work remotely for over 34,000 staff members based on their documented medical conditions and we have allowed maximum flexibility for our parents to choose either full-time remote learning for their children at any time. Just over 50 percent of our students have elected that option. With that important context, I’d like to provide you an overview of the comprehensive
health and safety protocols that we’ve implemented. Health and safety are our first priorities always. The protocols that we have put in place and the decisive actions we have taken show that we are listening to the health experts and working hard to keep our students and staff safe. We are taking a multilayered approach to safety that integrates actions that are all essential. That includes safe levels of ventilation, social distancing, use the face coverings, proper hand hygiene, randomized testing, and informing families about monitoring their children’s health. All of these taken together are key strategies we’re employing in our schools to decrease the risk of transmission and were part of our back to school pledge to our students, families, and educators. Let me just say a little bit more about these important strategies. In terms of ventilation, it is simple. No room will be used by staff or students if it doesn’t meet our ventilation standards. We have surveyed every building and have conducted extensive repairs in spaces that need modifications. If for any reason, the fix was not feasible, that room simply hasn’t and won’t be used. The Department of Education followed federal
standards for disease control guidance for school operations on your ventilation to reduce the spread of COVID-19. Every classroom was inspected by School Construction Authority led teams of professional engineers. Repairs and remediation efforts were based directly on those assessments including fixing Windows and fan motors and cleaning air ducts. We have taken ventilation concerns very seriously.

Prior to educators returning, we notified 10 buildings that their staff needed to work from home wall repairs were concluded. Now, only one of those buildings remain off-line. Out of the 64,550 classrooms across our system, 99 percent are in use. We also identified and prepared alternative spaces for those schools that needed them. In addition, DOE has purchased CO2 testing devices and 30,000 high-efficiency particulate air or HEPA purifiers for the first day of school and will continue to order more is needed. These purifiers are certified to remove virus size particles from the air and are being used in nurses’ offices, isolation rooms, and other spaces may require additional filtration. The air testing devices will also help staff measure CO2 levels which are an indicator of adequate ventilation. Next,
personal protective equipment or PPE and cleaning supplies have also been any area of focus. We have ordered and distributed millions of nonmedical masks and other PPE, including hundreds of thousands of cases of hand sanitizer, disinfectant wipes, and more. Over 500 pieces of PPE and cleaning supplies have been delivered to school so that may have a 30 day supply of those items on hand at all times. We also launched a hotline the principles can call if they have any issues with PPE supplies and all of this is paid for out of our central budget so schools don’t have to worry about covering those costs out of their school budgets. Relatedly, custodial engineers are key contributors and our student communities remain healthy and safe. They ensure that the bathrooms are sufficiently stocked with soap and paper towels at all times and not all hand washing sinks are in a state of good repair. Our custodial engineers confirm weekly that all buildings under their care have at least a 30 day supply of hand soap, paper towels, PPE, hand sanitizer, disposable gloves, and antiviral disinfectant in their inventory. To minimize the potential transmission of COVID-19, custodial engineers have implemented the
following protocols in all of our buildings: there is nightly disinfecting of all exposed surfaces in all occupied spaces using electrostatic backpack sprayers within an EPA approved disinfectant. All nonporous frequently contacted surfaces such as desks, tabletop, drinking fountain, faucet handles, door hardware, push plates, light switches, and handrails are wiped down and disinfected throughout the day utilizing an antiviral disinfectant. Special attention is paid to horizontal surfaces in buildings, near areas, classrooms, and bathrooms and custodial engineers are required to complete and maintain daily bathroom inspection and daily building disinfection laws. We will continue to ensure that custodial engineers have the resources that they need to ensure our cleaning and disinfecting standards are being met. Now, nurses. Another critical contributor to our safety efforts as our nursing force. The city Council has been a great advocate for ensuring that our school buildings have access to nurses and now we have made sure that, with every school building, has the school nurse. In partnership with New York City Health and Hospitals, which have provided critical support on this issue,
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the office of school health now has almost 400 additional nurses that cover all K-12 schools which, at the start of the school year, did not have a nurse, as well as a supply to cover for any absences on any given day. Additionally, there are 100 nurses who provide geographic coverage for early childhood programs. A health hotline is staffed by nurses of early childhood program providers it also serves as providers to them, as well. In terms of health monitoring, we know that that is essential and even before entering school buildings each morning, students and staff know how to take their temperature and complete their health screening checklist following the states recommendation. Beyond this, we have been and will continue to educate and enforce the key for actions in preventing the spread of COVID-19. In those keys for our physical distancing, wearing face coverings, hand hygiene, and, very important, staying home sick. If a student is at school and does not feel well, they will be escorted to the school’s isolation room. They will be tended to by a school nurse or a caring adult who has been designated for that role until their guardian is able to pick them up from school. Every school has access
to professionals and highly trained building response
teams that is ready to respond in the event that
there is a health concern in the school. BRT’s are
trained staff within a school building selected by
and in cooperation with principal or principals who
are tasked with emergency information and action
management responsibilities. Now, testing. We know
that widely available access to the testing and a
strong contact tracing and core team system are
essential to being able to manage the pandemic and
sustained low levels of community transmission. City
to rotten testing sites are offering free COVID testing
for all New Yorkers citywide, but are prioritizing
expedited results for school staff and students with
results coming within 48 hours if they go to one of
the 22 sites across the city. We have also been
working with the Department of Health and Mental
Hygiene and that Test and Trace Corps, known as T2,
and establishing monthly random testing at every
school. The goal is to discover COVID-19 positive
cases and that is exactly what we are doing.
Beginning October 9, test and trace rolled out
mandatory random testing at all schools to continue
to keep transmission in our classrooms low and our
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communities safe. Complement to that testing work is our interagency situation room which launched on September 14th. This is a one-stop shop. Rapid response team staff by personnel from the Department of Education, the Department of Health, T2, and it is open six days a week for principals to communicate questions, concerns, and potential cases. Where necessary, classrooms or school buildings are temporarily closed to maintain the safety of school communities and prevent the spread of the virus. Citywide school buildings will close if the percentage of positive COVID-19 tests in New York City is three percent or more using a seven day rolling average. This is the most aggressive threshold in the nation. Additionally, based on the surveillance data from the Department of Health, we know that certain areas of the city are experiencing a sharp increase in cases and test percent positivity. We have temporarily closed schools in the COVID-19 red and orange zones, designated by the governor, and will continue to work with the state on best approaches in these neighborhoods to keep New Yorkers safe. On a daily basis, the Department of Health and T2 are deploying hundreds of staff in a
multitude of operational efforts to increase access to testing, to conduct outreach, and engage with affected communities to mitigate the transmission of COVID-19. In addition to all these efforts and to protect the physical well-being of our school communities, we are even more attentive than ever to supporting the social and emotional needs of our students in response to the trauma that they have experienced due to this pandemic. Schools have been equipped to integrate trauma informed practices into instruction and to build off of last year’s major expansion of mental health supports and social emotional learning through the bridge to school initiative. The bridge to school initiative integrates social emotional learning into the curriculum and will provide trauma informed training for more teachers, as well as resources for teachers and principals to manage blended learning. Available sessions include training to recognize the signs of trauma and its impact on young people and effective trauma care practices that align to existing social emotional and mental health support systems used in the Department of Education. Another part of our work includes the partnership with the Child Mind
Institute to offer additional supports for school-based staff this fall, including webinars and workshops, videos, and print materials to support social emotional learning in the classroom and a helpline for educators to receive additional guidance and support. Again, I want to thank the Council and, particularly, Chair Treyger care for his constant and consistent advocacy and action on the importance of attending to the social emotional needs of our students. That focus has made us more prepared and better equipped to respond during this crisis. Throughout the spring and summer, the DOE has trained approximately 13,000 people in a trauma 101 series focused on grief and loss, bereavement, and self-care in a crisis. This included crisis team members who responded to schools that experienced a loss and provided mental health supports to school leaders and school support staff. Since launching the Bridge to School Initiative, we trained over 1600 school leaders and over 45,000 school-based staff with numbers growing daily. We are very excited about this work and look forward to continued partnership in service of our students and our school communities. We are also navigating the
unprecedented and constantly changing realities of this pandemic. There is a lot of information coming quickly in real time that we worked diligently to process and communicate with clarity as best we can.

Effective two-way communication is especially important during a time of crisis and engagement with principals and educators has been an important part during this time of crisis and executing a safe reopening. I have sent frequent emails directly to principles in order to ensure they are hearing the most important updates related to COVID-19. Blended learning and health and safety and, in response to principal feedback, we now send them our Principles Digest highlights at 7 AM on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays to keep them fully informed about more detailed information that they need to know. In addition to written correspondence, we have regularly convened citywide principal meetings to share updated policy information and provide them with an opportunity to ask questions. And, with respect to communication, it is important to communicate just as vigorously with our families and we have proactively engaged with them throughout the summer and reopening process providing them regular updates and
opportunities to ask questions and connect with community partners. Schools know their community’s best and many have communication tools at their disposal to convey information to families. That includes Robo calls, texts, emails, websites, and more. Additionally, all of the letters sent home to families by way of principles have been translated into nine languages. In addition to the letters, we share news and updates to DOE’s website, the morning bell blog, and social media. The DOE leadership also hosts or attends a virtual town halls for families to answer questions on a regular basis and we been holding briefings and briefing calls with elected officials, advocates, and student leaders throughout this entire time. One particular user of these opportunities is Chair Treyger and his staff who we have had many almost weekly briefings with and has had access to all of my cabinet on a regular basis. Our family and community empowerment team is supporting parent leaders through weekly check ins with education and president councils, weekly email updates about important resources, and news for families and constant ongoing, on-call, targeted support. Face hosts, virtual meetings, and town halls
to inform families about health, safety, and academic updates and, in addition, our fees team support family facing district and school staff weekly watch party Wednesday events and training sessions. They also provide direct support for the 1400 parent coordinators through a website with information and training resources on remote learning, wellness, and other topics that are important to our communities. Finally, the Department of Education is actively engaging with students to understand their real experiences with remote and blended learning and with school reopening. We respond to their questions and concerns while focusing on such topics that young people prioritize such as grading policy, device distribution, diversity and admissions, and COVID-related health concerns. I would like to take just a moment to also talk about the proposed legislation. In trial number 2058 requires DOE to report on remote learning attendance. We support the goal of this bill to ensure that families, elected officials, advocates, and other stakeholders have access to meaningful data on student attendance during remote and blended learning. In trial number 2104 requires DOE to report data on instruction and services
provided during remote learning including students with disabilities and multilingual learners. We look forward to further discussions with the Council on both of these important pieces of legislation. In conclusion, this public health emergency has tested all New Yorkers in many, many ways the DOE does to rise to the challenge of this moment has been a testament to the determination and incredible staff, students, and families. We are taking to lessons we learned every day to adapt and improve and so for we have seen that our protocols are largely working. I want to assure you that we are going to remain flexible, transparent, and continue to work with our own health experts, our principles, our teachers, our parents and students who are partners with us in all of this. So, on behalf of my colleagues, I want to thank you for your time and we will be happy to answer the questions that you may have.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: And we’re just going to quickly swear in-- because I know we had muting issues before. Deputy Chancellor Austin and Kevin Moran. So, if you both could activate your video, please. Do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth before these
committees and respond honestly to Council member questions? Deputy Chancellor?

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AUSTIN: I do.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: And Mr. Moran?

KEVIN MORAN: I do.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: And, Chancellor, we just ask that, when Council member Treyger begins his questions, if you are going to point to someone on your team to answer questions, if you could just call out their names so our master muter would know who to unmute for you. Thank you.

CHANCELLOR CARRANZA: I like that term. Master unmuter.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chancellor, for your testimony. I also wish, before we start asking questions, just recognize we have also been joined by Council members Miller and Council member Dromm. I want to begin by getting clarity, I think, for school communities and for the public. And if additional folks have to weigh in on this, I welcome that. Does the city of New York have a mandatory testing plan for New York City schools and, if so, why is there language and notice to school families that consent to testing is not
mandatory? I think that has created a lot of confusion in school communities and for families and I would appreciate if someone can just clarify what exactly is the testing plan for schools? Thank you.

CHANCELLOR CARRANZA: So, Chairman Treyger, there is mandatory testing for any human being that is in a school building during the school year. We know that test and trace is very important, but we also know that, in order to have a handle on what is happening in our school communities, it is important to have testing. And just as a heads up, I am going to ask Dr. Jay Varma if he wants to chime in after I give some top lines. Let me be very clear. John Locke wrote about our social compact about living together in a society. This is where we test our social compact because it is about the health and safety during the pandemic of everyone. But we also are educators and we are in schools, so we are asking for consent. We are requesting that parents sign consent forms and we are giving ourselves time to educate our parent communities, educate our student communities, educate our school communities around why we are doing that. But let’s be very clear. A student who does not have consent or any adult that
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does not submit to testing, randomized testing, there is an option for those students and that is fully remote learning. But if we are going to be together in the school building, randomized testing what will be mandated. It is mandated. Dr. Varma?

DR. JAY VARMA: Nothing else from me.

Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: So, I just want to note that the-- and I appreciate the answer. The notice that was sent to families says something a little bit different. The DOE has communicated to parents and guardians that, while consent to testing is not, quote, not mandatory, children who do not consent to testing, quote, may-- not will-- may be switched to remote learning if a sufficient sample size is not reached. So, the question is how will this threshold be determined? Who will determine when nonconsenting students are transferred to remote learning and is there a possibility that the same cohort of students will be repeatedly tested if a school has a low rate of return of consent forms?

CHANCELLOR CARRANZA: So, I will ask Dr. long to talk about the testing in the cohorting. So, again, Chair Treyger, let me be clear. We will
clarify the language and I believe there is clarifying language that is going out to clarify what the expectations are. We prefer to start with an education approach rather than the hammer, but let’s be very clear. And I appreciate the opportunity to be clear during this hearing. Testing is mandatory for in-person learning. There is a ramp up and, of course, we want parents to be engaged, so that is why we are asking for the consent, but there will be mandatory randomized testing. Dr. long, could you talk in a little more detail about how that randomization is happening and what that looks like, please.

DR. TED LONG: Yes. Thank you, Chancellor. So, the way that randomization works is we develop a roster of anybody who would be in the building. It is randomized and then a list is put together with names. We then go down that list, which is a randomized list and that’s who was selected for testing when we go in to do testing but that point in time in the school. That is it simply. I’d be happy to go into it with more detail if that would be helpful.
CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: So, Dr. Long, I’m not sure if the question was answered. In the fact that is there a possibility that the same cohort of students will be repeatedly tested if a school has a low rate of return of consent forms and is repeatedly testing the same cohort of students, some of whom may have had antibodies, a statistically valid way of measuring point in time prevalence?

DR. TED LONG: Two parts to your question. Mr. Chancellor, do you mind if I jump in?

CHANCELLOR CARRANZA: No. Please.

DR. TED LONG: Okay. The purpose of doing a randomized list is to avoid testing the same group over and over. That’s the reason why we do it. So, if you have 100 different students and your randomized list and you have to test 20 percent of them, you are going to have, very likely, different 20 percent because they are randomly selected every single time. That’s the purpose of randomization. To avoid the exact problem, you’re clarifying. So, I agree with your question. The second part of your question was for antibodies. What do we do if we are retesting people that may have antibodies? To be clear -- and I wish this was better news -- we cannot
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say with certainty that antibodies confirm immunity. We truly hope that they confirm at least a degree of immunity, but that is something that we— that is why we are doing only PCR testing in terms of our school testing program here. We are not using the antibodies because we would not want to draw a conclusion about the immunity that the science does not yet support.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: So, and I want to be clear. I’m not asking for a hammer. I’m just asking for basic transparency. Folks want to know what the plan is. The folks on television use the language mandatory and a paper went out and an email went out to the families that’s is not mandatory. So, I think every opportunity we have to clarify and make this as clear as possible is really important and I think that, if additional language is coming from City Hall and DOE and health officials to make this more clear, I think that that is appreciated because— I’m just sharing stuff that’s on the ground— there is a lot of confusion about what the plan actually is. Let me ask how many affirmative consent forms have been returned citywide and how many denials of consent have been returned?
CHANCELLOR CARRANZA: I am going to ask one of my colleagues who will have the most recent information. Who would have that answer, folks? Who has the most recent information? Doctor?

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Can we unmute Dr. Varma?

DR. JAY VARMA: I don’t have it specifically handy, but we are trying to gather this. The dilemma with it, you have to keep in mind, is that people can consent up until the last moment. That includes adults who can consent, obviously, any time, as well as students who can bring in consent forms up until the last minute. So, it’s actually a rolling process over time in one of the reasons why--I just want to clarify two important concepts that are coming up. One of the challenges that we have with using the word mandatory and one of that reasons that language was written originally the way it is is because people interpret mandatory to be forced. You know, students, adults have autonomy over their bodies. They have the right to consent to a procedure being done. Now, of course, if they don’t consent to it, there can be consequences for failure to consent, but I will just explain that that is one
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of the reasons that that language was bandied about quite a number of times. It was to remove that connotation that mandatory equals forced. And then, second, to get to your question about consent, this is a rolling process during the month of October. We are the only school district that I know of anywhere in the world of anywhere of this magnitude. There are certainly some very small schools that have tried programs like this. So, it is going to take us a little while to figure out and assimilate the numbers and to determine whether or not we actually got the sample size that we need to draw statistic—

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: But, Dr. Varma, how many consent forms did you receive as of yesterday?

DR. JAY VARMA: Yeah. I don’t have the number of consent forms, but I can give you the number of people that were tested. Well, tested—

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Well, Dr. Varma, I have to say this is a hearing on the safety of reopening schools in the city and how does not having that number instill confidence in the public and within this Council that we are getting this right? Just because you are trying it doesn’t make it right.
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We need information to evaluate this and to keep, of
course, folks informed.

CHANCELLOR CARRANZA: Mr. Chair--

DR. JAY VARMA: And, Council member, we
tested 7257 people in the past, what, three days and
had 15 of those were positive for 0.2 percent
positivity rate.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: And how many of the
7000--

DR. JAY VARMA: That is a very large
sample size relative to the proportion of students
that are actually attending in person learning
turning that.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: And, Dr. Varma, of
the 7000, how many attend school in the yellow zones?

DR. JAY VARMA: That I don’t actually
have because what we are going to be doing is we’re
going to start specific programs in the yellow zones
to do testing on a weekly basis as mandated by the
governor, so we will have to get you that number
specifically.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Dr. Varma, so,
again, the yellow zones, I know, were drawn by the
governor, not the Mayor. So, I get that. But there
COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION JOINTLY WITH COMMITTEE ON HEALTH is a lot of tension and anxiety within the yellow zones because there is some overlap with the ZIP Code plan which the Mayor rolled out. And I appreciate that you are sharing some testing data, but we don’t even know what the numbers are in the yellow zones and we do need the number of consent forms coming in because it absolutely gives us a sense of where things are at. You know, here I am telling you there is confusion on the ground in the middle of a pandemic, in a crisis, and we don’t have this basic information. So, when can you get the committee they information of the number of students and staff tested in the yellow zones and the number of consent forms that have been returned.

CHANCELLOR CARRANZA: Mr. Chairman?

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Yeah?

CHANCELLOR CARRANZA: So, I just got an update as of the end of the day yesterday there were 72,000 consent forms returned by students. So, we have 72,000. As Dr. Varma has said several times, this is a rolling process. There is a lot of consent forms coming in on a daily basis, but as of the end of the day yesterday, 72,000 consent forms.
CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: So, thank you, Mr. Chancellor. And of the 72,000 consent forms as of yesterday, how many were in the affirmative and how many were negative?

CHANCELLOR CARRANZA: Consent forms mean that they are in the affirmative. So, those are 72,000 people that signed a consent form saying you have permission.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Right. But families have an option to provide up form that says that they don’t give consent. Is that right?

CHANCELLOR CARRANZA: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Right. So, these were 72,000 affirmative consent forms? Thank you, him Mr. Chancellor, for that information.

CHANCELLOR CARRANZA: We will get you the refusal number, but I understand it is very minimal. But we will get that number for you.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Right. And just to further follow up on that, how many schools have a 20 percent or lower rate of consent among their students who have opted into in person learning?

CHANCELLOR CARRANZA: Say that one more time, Mr. Treyger?
CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Sure. How many schools have a 20 percent or lower rate of consent among their students who have opted into in person learning?

CHANCELLOR CARRANZA: Well, we will get you that information. But, again, schools are building their positive consent numbers, so that is changing daily, almost hourly. So, when we will get you the most recent information today.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: I would appreciate that, Mr. Chancellor, because any additional information provides clarity and can give folks a sense of knowledge of what actually is happening. I want to do now-- also, I wanted to clarify with the health officials just for a moment. And this is important for families to understand, as well. I have been contacted by a number of families and parents asking a question about why they are not allowed to have a pediatrician provide a test for their child, especially in children, or testing could be a very traumatizing experience. And I know that, Dr. Long, we were on a briefing call, but I do think it is important for the public to understand what is the reasoning, the rationale, why notes from
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pediatricians or results from pediatricians are not
accepted by the DOE?

DR. JAY VARMA: Yeah. I can start. So, any parent has the right and we actually actively
encourage all New Yorkers to get tested regularly. And that includes parents taking their young children
in. So, in fact, they can take their child to the pediatrician anytime they want to to get tested.

Further the purposes of the random sample survey that we are doing, to make this statistically valid and
have a good epidemiological representation, it’s designed as what we call a quaint prevalent survey
which is that all of the tests done in the specific population and, in the situation, the unit of
reference is the school community of attending in person learning. All of those tests need to be done
on the same day using the exact same collection method and using the exact same testing method. So,
if we want to be able to draw valid conclusions about this, that is the important approach to go. But,
again, I would just challenge the notion that you can’t take your child to pediatrician. You absolutely can’t do that. Those test results are reported. If there is a positive result, it is
immediately received by Test and Trace, the health department, and then reported and managed by the situation room.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Right, Dr. Varma.

I was just making the point that parents were asking the question-- I was at the CDC virtual meeting recently where this came up. Parents asking why can’t the results be used in place of the randomized sample? And there was an explanation of-- which I heard from Dr. Long-- but I think it’s just important to share this information with the public also parents can do this, but as far as the randomized testing, testing has to happen inside the school. Is that correct?

CHANCELLOR CARRANZA: Correct. Yes.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: And can you also explain why parents or what communication to parent of young children, if they want to be there to support them-- is there mobile testing by the school? Is there something where parents could provide support to kids if this is a very traumatizing experience for them?

DR. JAY VARMA: Yeah. I think we are very sensitive to the fact that, obviously,
particular for younger children, this is going to be a new and potentially, you know, worrisome experience. At the same time, we have to balance the infection control precautions and one of the most important infection control precautions that we could institute, one of the best ways that we can prevent COVID is by limiting the number of people that are physically present in a building at any given time. And that’s why we don’t, unfortunately, allow caretakes, guardians of children to be present physically in the building. And the providers that we have, we absolutely recognize that the parents are concerned about this, but we have to assure people that we are only hiring teams that we have a tremendous amount of trust with because we have actually worked with them many times before.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: And, Dr. Varma, this question is to you, again. As a senior advisor to the mayor on public health and someone who is watching this very closely, does it concern you that we only have up to this point, 15 percent of consent forms and citywide in situations where we are also seeing spikes in cases across the city? Does it concern you and can you please elaborate?
DR. JAY VARMA: Yeah. I would say the reason--- I would say, first of all, we obviously aspire to make sure the random testing-- random sample survey program is done with as much rigor as possible and to use the highest level of participation. It is absolutely not just an aspiration but our intent. But I would explain that, actually, testing, even though I am a firm zealot when it comes to testing for the community control of COVID-19 and, in fact, was the architect of our original testing and tracing design for this, I do not [inaudible 01:13:48] emphasize that testing was not even one of the first, second, or even third lines of defense to protecting our children, our students, and our staff from COVID-19. As the Chancellor has clearly laid out, and as you can see from the examples in other parts, you know, here in the United States aware people relied on testing, testing alone will not save you. What you need it is the universal masking, the physical distance, the reduction in class sizes for the aggressive use of hand hygiene and, of course, the presence of adequate ventilation. So, I am not concerned that, you know, that during this current rollout, that we don’t have
a very high level of consents, because I view our
testing program is providing us a snapshot into the
effectiveness of our prevention measures, but not
really the full picture.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: So, Dr. Varma, I
will say that I am not a public health expert. I am
a teacher by trade and I know what I know and I don’t
know what I don’t know and I appreciate your service,
but I will share with you is that Dr. Fauci, who I
think, you know, it is Brooklyn’s old, America’s
doctor right now was asked a question about schools
in testing and he made it very clear on national
television that, in communities where we are seeing
increased transmission or increased cases, it’s very
important to get the surveillance and the test done
right, in addition to the mask wearing and
compliance. He stressed the importance of having a
testing plan. So, I’m just sharing with you that it
is concerning, at least to me, and, again, I am not a
doctor. You are and I appreciate your service. It
is concerning to me that only 15 percent of students
who have opted for in person learning have returned
their consent forms as of this date at a time when we
are seeing increased positivity rates across the
city. And if you want to just respond one more time and then we’ll move on.

DR. JAY VARMA: Yeah. Absolutely.

Thank you. I mean, I think it’s important to keep in mind that, you know, whether it’s Dr. Fauci or other national leaders are talking about it, they are trying to express feedback on what the United States, as a whole, should be doing. They are not talking about New York City where let me-- it is very important for people to recognize here we perform more tests per capita on people of all ages in any other jurisdiction in the United States of this size and most places in the world. Because of all of the efforts that have been done by the city and our partners, we performed over 50,000 tests in a single day last week and those numbers continue to rise. So, the context in which Dr. Fauci and other people are making those comments is not just specific to schools. It’s also specific to the fact that many places around the country perform only a fraction of tests available in the community when we have here in New York City.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Right. And look. I understand that, you know-- we had a hearing the
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DOE did not attend recently where public health experts, doctors, came to testify and they shared in my colleagues and others were present. They shared very serious concerns about the mayor’s hybrid model. They shared concerns about increased exposure to kids on different days. So, if Monday they are in school and then on Tuesday they are with-- if their parents could afford childcare, there in a child care setting, they are increasing exposure to folks. Is there a body of research that you could point to that gives folks, parents, a sense of confidence and safety in this model? Because, obviously, there is work out. There is public health experts actually cautioning about our approach right now.

DR. JAY VARMA: Yeah. I would say that, first of all, we all, in the scientific community, have to be humble. We have all been surprised throughout this experience about how the virus behaves both at a molecular level, as well as at the population level. So, I want to preface everything I say based on that. In terms of the body of research, the body of research is not the rigor that we would normally love to have because we don’t have the time for that. So, the body of research that does exist
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is empiric, real-world evidence from all over the world with both similar, as well as very different economic social demographic structures. And that includes Asia. That includes large swaths of Europe. And I can tell you, based on my own personal research into all these places because I have worked globally for the past 20 years and have contacts all over the world. There are no places that are requiring mandatory testing at this scale. And, in fact, have been able to keep their schools open with even fewer of the systems that we have in place. Many places don’t actually use a hybrid model, for example, in Germany. Our don’t use universal masking. Don’t have the same, you know, rigorous monitoring techniques that we have and have been able to open up school successfully. So, I think it is absolutely true that there are many in the public health community that feel that certain— one group of activities should be done. There are others that feel another group of activities should be done, but the real world empiric lived experience to date is that the approach is that we are taking are the right approaches to make school safe.
CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: So, Dr. Varma, I’ll make one last point and then I will move on to technology. I just want to say that, you know, I am trying to provide clarity for myself and also, most importantly, for school families and the public and, of course, my colleagues. The governor of New York and his folks go on television and say that we need to put yellow, orange, red zones and, in addition to overlapping the mayor ZIP Codes or whatever you want to call this, we don’t have enough data right now and information. Earlier, you cannot tell me how many folks we have tested in the yellow zones where there is an acknowledgment by state health officials that we are seeing increases and spikes in cases. So, I think it is too early to judge, I think, even from anyone’s part, that this is all safe, this is all great I know that we need the data. We need to make informed decisions and I am just telling you that, as of this moment, there is still confusion about what the testing plan is, even though I appreciate folks providing additional information today at the hearing. We need a lot more information and it has to reach our multiethnic, diverse communities because, right now, there remains a disconnect. I
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want to move on to the Chancellor with regard to technology.

CHANCELLOR CARRANZA: Chairman--

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Mr. Chancellor--

Yes? Please.

CHANCELLOR CARRANZA: I’m sorry. Just in order to provide some more clarity, the number of permission forms that we’ve gotten is closer to 20 percent of our students who are in blended learning mode and that does not include any statistics on staff because staff are also part of the testing regime. So, when this random testing happens in the randomization takes place, it includes not only students, but also adults in the building. I explained it in terms of it is every human being in the building is part of the randomized set. So, we will break that data down for you with a little more specificity. I can also tell you that, as of October 14, in terms of testing that has happened for schools in the yellow zones, there been 3229 tests conducted. There have been 3100 tests received and there been only for positive results of that testing up through the 14th. So, those are schools specifically in the
yellow zone and the testing that is happening in those schools.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you, Mr. Chancellor. And would you, by any chance, know how many consent forms from the yellow zones that we have received?

CHANCELLOR CARRANZA: No. We are working to disaggregate that data for you.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: I appreciate it.

And, Mr. Chancellor, is there a separate and different-- I’m hearing, and that’s why wanted clarity, I am hearing reports that there are separate and different testing strategies for district 75? Can you clarify?

CHANCELLOR CARRANZA: Well, students and staff in district 75 will also be tested, but what we understand is that our district 75 students are probably some of our most vulnerable students in our school system. I know you know this very, very well. So, there are additional precautions and, I would say, sensitivities that we have to keep in mind when we do this randomized testing with district 75 students. It’s a scary experience. It could be a very scary experience for those students. So, we are
working with our educators in district 75 to craft the protocols for testing the students in district 75 schools so that it is not the scary experience. We are paying attention to their social emotional learning needs and it’s not a negative experience for them.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: So, Mr. Chancellor, I know that you know that and I appreciate your understanding of that. My question is to the health team. Why wasn’t this all prepared before the reopening of schools for kids in district 75 and staff who work there? Mr. Chancellor, you are not a health experts. You are an educator and you know your stuff and I appreciate your service, but the question is to City Hall into the health team, why wasn’t that all prepared before school reopened? Before kids and staff returned to school in district 75?

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Can we unmute Dr. Long?

DR. JAY VARMA: This is Jay. I think you and muted me, but I can--

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: You are both on muted. So, go ahead.
DR. JAY VARMA: Okay. I mean, I can just start really briefly and then maybe Ted can talk about the options that are available. In terms of the policy decision at the outset, the policy was exactly what the Chancellor had said which is that, at the beginning, we are-- that as I just described to you about why, you know, we don’t allow, you know, parents to come into the room, come into the building to support their children during testing, we also did not feel that, for children in district 75, many of whom have, you know, behavioral challenges, that it was appropriate to actually do testing in the way that we think it must be done safely to prevent COVID transmission which is to be done physically present in the school. So, our original plan and policy decision at the outset was, basically, provide education and awareness about where parents could take their children to be tested. Since that time, we’ve heard the feedback that the families and the parents and the staff want more information and more streamlined system. So, maybe, Ted, you can discuss what some of the options are for that.

DR. TED LONG: Yeah. I just want to say, Chair Treyger, this is really important to me as
a practicing physician. I see patients every week. I see patients Friday afternoons. When I’m done here, I’m going to see my patients. Parents must be given the opportunity in T 75 schools to be with their children at the time of the tests. They need to be there to support their kids and that either can be done at the school or it could be done at one of our facilities that we currently have. We have some of the best pediatricians in the whole world in New York City Health and Hospitals. We have many locations and what we want to do is we want to be able to test all students in T 75 schools who want to be tested or whose parents want to test them, but in no way that allows their parents to be with them. And, in particular, they can come to one of our sites now with there. And have a world expert do the tests themselves. And that is very available now. I care very much about this and if it is not clear, let us know how we can make it more clear because I couldn’t agree with your importance of the point anymore.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Dr. Long, I appreciate you and I appreciate your access and availability to my office. You have been updating us and I appreciate you. The question just to clarify.
You mentioned that we are extending this accommodation to parents of children who go to district 75. There are children with IEP’s who are not in district 75 settings. Is that same courtesy being given to them?

DR. TED LONG: You mean, in the terms of can they come to be tested by one of our pediatricians at one of our sites with their parents? Absolutely.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Having parents present. Yes.

DR. TED LONG: To be clear, we have designated some--- You can sort of think of it as some of our sites as centers of excellence for performing tests in challenging situations or with younger kids like my son is very young. So, those sites exist in our system today and we will share with you the exact list of them so the parents will know exactly where they can take their kids for a world-class experience.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: And, Dr. Long, is it accurate that the city had to update its notification protocols with schools after recently we learned that a school safety personnel was tested...
positive, and we wish them a speedy recovery, but the information did not reach in a timely fashion, the school community. Is that accurate? Because I am hearing reports from folks on the ground that there has been an update to NYPD DOE notification with regards to when there is a positive case?

DR. TED LONG: Yeah. I appreciate the question. In terms of the situation room and its communications, I’m going to do for questions around situation rooms to Dr. Stephens who is joined us here. Dr. Stevens, are you on the line?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER STEPHENS: I am I met muted? Okay. Thank you. So, thank you for that and I appreciate the questions. I am Daniel Stephens, for the record. I am a pediatrician and deputy commissioner for family and child health. And I am actually sitting upstairs in the situation room right now. So, part of our function in this multi agency endeavor that is the situation room is making sure that we get information from the school community when there is a concern, that we look up and we make sure that we have the accurate verification of that and then circle back and close the loop and communicate clearly with school
communities and school leaders. And so, the situation room opened September 14 and, since then, we have been updating our protocols to make sure that letters and calls and direct communication to school communities happened in the shortest time possible, but also making sure that the information is the most accurate and verified.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: But, Dr. Stephens, can you just note for the record was there an update in recent days between notification protocols between NYPD and DOE since safety agents report to NYPD, not to DOE?

DR. DANIEL STEPHENS: So, actually, I cannot speak to the actual protocols to notification between those agencies, but I can make sure that we get back to you with that information.

CHANCELLOR CARRANZA: Chairman Treyger?

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Yes, Mr. Chancellor?

CHANCELLOR CARRANZA: I can verify that that is, in fact, true. So, we have been in contact with NYPD. So, now, their reporting system is synced up with our reporting system which is synced up with the situation room. So, it is all connected.
CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: And I want to note for the record that that, no way, was an issue within DOE or the situation room. It is the other agency that, quite frankly, there was a disconnect from their part and I do appreciate the recognition. And I did visit the situation room and, Commissioner Melanie La Rocca is a rock star and she is working very hard there and the folks there are working very hard. So, I appreciate that. I want to move to the topic-- because I’m running out of time for my colleagues, as well, to the issue of technology. Mr. Chancellor, as of this moment, how many requests is the DOE in receipt of as of this moment for a device and for Internet?

CHANCELLOR CARRANZA: So, that is an hourly changing statistic, so I’m going to ask Lauren Siciliano to give us. She is right on top of that. So, Lauren Siciliano? Chief administration Officer.

LAUREN SICILIANO: Good morning, everyone. Thank you, Chancellor and thank you, Chair Treyger, for the opportunity to talk about what we’re doing on devices. As you know, it is absolutely critical and we take very seriously the commitment to ensure that students have the devices that they need. And that
is why, since the spring, we have distributed roughly 350,000 LTE enabled iPads to students who need them to support remote instruction. It was really important for us to ensure that those devices were LTE enabled so that students who didn’t have Internet access at home could still access the Internet through those data plans. And, as we have done that distribution, we have started with our highest needs students first, starting with our students and shelter. Since the school year has started, schools have been working with their students and families to confirm they are device need. They have been distributing device inventory that they have and then letting us know what Remains. What devices they still need. Those evaluations are ongoing and, in the first-- the last few weeks, we’ve distributed about 20,000 iPads to students that needed them and, as I believe you are aware, we have ordered an additional hundred thousand iPads, LTE enabled iPads, to ensure that we can meet any outstanding demand, as well as have enough supply on hand for repairs and replacements.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: I mean, that’s information that I pretty much had. The question was
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how many requests are you in receipt of as of this
moment for devices and Internet as of today?

LAUREN SICILIANO: Sure. Absolutely. So,
as the Chancellor said, this is an [inaudible
01:31:47] process, so we get requests from schools
and then we follow up with the schools to confirm do
they have any devices on hand that they can
distribute? Are there devices on route, etc. So, as
of this moment, we have about 77,000 requests, but,
again, we then go in verify the need with the school,
so it is a constantly changing number.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: So, the logical
question would be why didn’t City Hall-- and I’m
going to pull out the mayors--because I-- as the
Public Advocate mentioned, we are under a mayoral
control system and he goes on television each morning
and he said for weeks that every kid who needed
technology had technology when, in fact, that is not
the case and the record has to be corrected. And I
think folks are asking the logical--- and I’m asking
the logical-- the question why didn’t the
administration take stock of this need months ago and
why did they only order these additional iPads now
when we have been hearing for months about many kids
in need of technology and, quite frankly, we just got
the information from the DOE that showed significant
disparities where—particularly around racial lines
and where many kids, obviously, did not walk on. A
low engagement rate. Low attendance rate. We don’t
even know how many kids have ever logged on once
since March and I understand that there is different
modes of instruction, but the fact that we still—
you just shared with me that 77,000 requests for
technology, these are almost 100,000 kids or more
that I don’t know what instruction they are getting
right now. You know? Regardless of whatever model
people support. Hybrid, not hybrid. Remote learning
is a part of the program and the fact that thousands
of our kids, particularly from under resourced
communities, still don’t have a device is
unacceptable and shameful and I want to lay fall
squarely with the mayor and his office for being in
denial about the severity of this issue. This is not
new and Mr. Chancellor knows this as an educator for
many years, as well. The issue of Internet
bandwidth, Internet access, technology is not a new
issue. This was the mayor’s plan and, you know, to
meet he failed to meet the needs of our kids. The
fact that we have thousands of kids, particularly in under resourced communities still without a device. How soon will we get these devices and also have you heard feedback from educators and families that they prefer chrome books in some cases because of the ability to type and better functionality as opposed to the iPads and do they come with Internet— the Internet enabled us some of these iPads are? I would appreciate an update on that.

CHANCELLOR CARRANZA: Chair Treyger—

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Yes.

CHANCELLOR CARRANZA: all start, but if Lauren would like to chime in, as well. Let me just clarify, if you don’t mind, a little bit about that 77,000 number. As Lauren Siciliano mentioned, these are requests that are coming from schools and the assumption is—and it’s the best assumption—the assumption is that schools are bringing forth requests because their students need the devices. However, the reason that we go back and then engage with the schools to understand better what the number is that they are requesting is that, in some cases, schools may be requesting devices to fulfill their supply in their school. So, they may have had five
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computer carts, three of them they have signed out so
they’re asking for those computer carts to be
replenished. So, the reason I mention that is that,
in that case, as you can tell, it’s not the case that
students don’t have a device because the school has
asked for a device. It’s not necessarily the case
that the student doesn’t have a device. There’s a
need for devices. So that’s what Lauren was talking
about in terms of we engage with the school to better
understand which is a device that’s needed in the
hands of a student, which is a device that is being
requested to replenish supply, and it’s not uniform
across the entire DOE. That being said, we also are
working and you’ve been a big voice in helping us
with this. In helping to secure internet access from
our internet providers in New York City who do very
well providing internet services to people who pay
full price to them. So we have been lobbying and
asking them to provide it either at no cost or at
very discounted rates which, when we pivoted in
March, we were able to pay for and, in some cases, we
got for free for our students that were-- our poor
students and our students in temporary housing, etc.
I’ll give you just one more example. We recently
hearing from a number of advocates who brought to our attention that there were a number of students in temporary housing that were unable to— actually, what we were told is that they didn’t have Internet access. So, we very quickly, working with our city agency partners, actually sent our teams from DIIT into those public housing buildings and, literally, checked the LTA signal. I’m not going to use names here, but there are different companies that have Wi-Fi or Internet connectivity and, literally, what we found is that, in those buildings, the card that enables connectivity that belonged to one company had poor service but a card that provides Internet connectivity from another company. So, we engaged then in the process of switching out those cards to the one that had better service. That is just an example of all of the very complex issues that kind of feed into this number of who has connectivity and he doesn’t have connectivity. I would only add to that that we had a number of students that were assigned devices and then graduated this summer, so we are in the process of working with those families and students to return those devices to us, as well. And that is also going to replenish our supply.
There is an urban myth out there that we don’t allow schools to order chrome books. That is absolutely not true, but we happen to be the largest school system in America, but we are not the only school system that is ordering devices from all of the manufacturers. So, there is a definite supply chain issue nationally, almost globally, with the supply of devices. What we have been able to do, again, working with our agency partners, is to really engage with our manufacturers and we have gone to the top of the list and many of those cases around chrome books, around iPads. We have been prioritized in terms of the supply chain aspects and I think our chief administrative officer Siciliano can tell you what the states are. The most current dates of when we are going to start getting those batches of devices we’ve ordered. Lauren?

LAUREN SICILIANO: Sure. Absolutely. So, everything I wholeheartedly agree with everything, of course, that the Chancellor just said. Those are all really important pieces of the work that we are doing to support students and ensure that they have connectivity. I would add, as well, that, dear question about chrome books versus iPads. So, both
in the spring and then with this most recent round of ordering are the devices that we act purchasing centrally, we looked across manufacturers who could get us a device-- the supply of devices that we needed in the timeframe that we needed. Obviously, with our scale and with the national and global supply chain issues that the Chancellor mentioned, that was not an easy task and Apple was able to do that and they were able to do that for LTE enabled devices which, as you mentioned, are just so essential to make sure that our students can connect. What we have done, based on feedback from students and families, from educators, and for many of you, we bordered many keyboards for the iPad so that, particularly for older students, they can use the keyboards with the iPad which makes it, you know, much more similar in terms of functionality and use to the chrome book. We are also, as the Chancellor mentioned, working with all of our manufacturers to prioritize supply for DOE. So, to take the chrome book example, we just spoke with our chrome book provider and they have prioritize supply for DOE. They don’t have the scale that Apple is giving us, but this way, when schools order individual sets of
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chrome books, it is about a four week turnaround they are estimating between the purchase and the delivery versus the mother dates that I know of been thrown out there.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Right. I just want to clarify a couple things I heard, as well. And I appreciate the additional information. There is a number reasons why many kids did not have a device, as well. First of all, as we know, in the spring--not faulting the DOE, but it took months for, I think, FedEx or the shipments to arrive for the technology and what happened as a result of that, as mentioned, a number of schools could not wait for the shipment and whatever technology they had in their school, they gave out to their kids. Now, what happens is that if you were and eighth grader and you are graduating, the school asked you to return the laptop and now you are an incoming freshman to high school and you don’t have a device. And so, I’ve heard from many high schools telling me that freshman don’t have devices. Also, I’ve heard from many of our immigrant families where-- and this is not a new issue. This is been going on for a number of years. Many immigrant families were fearful, afraid,
understandably so, to fill out any government forms
to return to the government out of fear of what that
would do to their immigration status. So, they never
got a device because they were fearful for filling
out the forms and they asked whether there was a way
for the schools to get the device and then the
schools would give it to them. So, these are couple
of the reasons why. And also, this is a high needs
school district and I want to just be very clear on
the record. This is not just the city. New York
State has a responsibility here. The federal
government has a responsibility here. This isn’t not
just a New York City issue, but I think it is
important just to get the facts out there about how
severe this challenge is. And it would’ve been much
more helpful for the mayor of New York to have been
upfront and vocal about this months ago rather than
tell the public that we are okay. And I’m not
faulting the Chancellor or any people on this call
right now. I hold the mayor accountable because that
is precious time that we lost in advocacy to ensure
that every kid got technology and Internet. Mr.
Chancellor, I’m going to ask one more question and
then moved to my colleague. Chair Levine has been
very patient. Forgive me. What percentage of schools are providing in person instruction by having students log into zoom from the classroom? I know that the mayor made a public pledge of providing in person instruction to all of our kids who opted for in person learning. As you know and I appreciate your service. I was also a former history teacher. I know what in person service is. Having an adult supervise kids log on to zoom is not in person instruction. That is a virtual study hall. So, what is the percentage of schools that are providing in person instruction or in person services, so to speak, by having students log in to zoom from the classroom as a result of the staffing shortage in our school system?

CHANCELLOR CARRANZA: Okay. Can you hear me now?

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Yes.

CHANCELLOR CARRANZA: So, Chair Treyger, again, your education background is just so refreshing because you understand the complexities of all of these issues and to have Chair Levine also be a former teacher is just an added bonus. So, thank you and I appreciate you lifting those out. Again,
we are doing something that, because of the hard work of my fellow New Yorkers, we put ourselves in a position because of the low transmission of community spread, that it provides and makes it possible for us to have in person learning even a modicum of the week. But, in order to do that and the nation’s largest, most complex school system, as you know, has been incredibly challenging, especially with the staffing issues and that staffing percentage and number of students that have chosen in person versus fully remote continues to change. So, with that, I am going to be the very first one to say that is not ideal for a student to come to a school and then have a remote experience or a blended or a virtual experience in school. But, as you so ably mentioned, it is beneficial because they had the socialization. They had the support of their teachers. They had guidance counselors. They have social workers. They get food. They see other children. Their parents are able to go to work. So, as we continue to build and get better and make the model better as we go forward, we are going to see less and less of those situations where the students are doing that. It is a very small number. I’m going ask our first deputy
Chancellor Donald Conyers. He may have a much more exact percentage because they are monitoring that.

So, Donald?

FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR CONYERS: Good morning, Chair Treyger, and all of the other members of the panel. And, Chancellor, I do have some information about the percentage of students receiving instruction, but I don’t have it with me at the moment and I do apologize because I am not situated where I thought I would be this morning and I apologize. I do not have that information with me right now.

CHANCELLOR CARRANZA: So, we will get that to you today.

FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR CONYERS: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Mr. Chancellor, yeah. It’s very important because I wanted just get to the heart of this that— and I’m just going to mention again that I speak to a number of school staff and I’m sure you do, as well and I have heard enough to determine that trust is very much broken in the school system and that mayor goes on television and says that he is promising in person instruction to the kids to sign up and, in fact, in many cases,
it’s not. So, I would appreciate that information. And also just to paint a picture to the public. The mayor said that everyone that signs up for in person learning would get in person services, in person instruction. The fact is many kids are not. The mayor said every kid would have technology who needs it. The fact is, as we have heard today, many kids still do not. So, I know that we are facing challenges, but being honest should not be a challenge for the mayor and for his office. And I think that is really important to drive home. I know, Mr. Chancellor, that you work for the mayor. We are under a mayoral control system, but it doesn’t help when there is this disconnect from what is going on television versus what is happening on the ground. I am going to pause here and turn it over to my very patient colleague, Chair Mark Levine, for questions. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Thank you, Chair Treyger, for your excellent work in this hearing and in general during this difficult crisis and good afternoon, Chancellor Carranza, Deputy Commissioner Stephens, Dr. Varma, and the team. I’m pleased to have the chance to converse with you for a moment.
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The city has set a standard of three percent positivity for systemwide conversion to distance-learning, but it appears now there is a standard for a move locally and in some cases where individual neighborhoods have hit three percent. And let me just pause to apologize for the background noise here. This is working from home in a small Manhattan apartment, so bear with me. The public has good information daily on the positivity rates citywide. We can track the seven day average every single day with public information, but the public doesn’t have that kind of information on a localized basis. The closest we have is positivity by ZIP Codes. Looking back over the past month with the one week delay, which is not the same as the rolling seven day average, but even using what limited public information we have, we can infer that there are already communities outside of the identified hotspots in Brooklyn and Queens where the positivity rate is above three percent. Most notably the South Shore Staten Island, for example, where, as far as I can tell, the positivity rate is actually higher than some neighborhoods like Kew Gardens which are considered hotspots. So, could you please clarify
what the criteria for localized shutdowns is and whether you can make such local information available on a real-time basis to the public?

CHANCELLOR CARRANZA: Thank you, Chair.

I’m going as Dr. Varma if he could clarify it for you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Can we please unmute Dr. Varma? There we go.

DR. JAY VARMA: Okay. Great. Thank you. Yeah. So, let me go through make sure I get all those questions, Council member. So, first of all, just to address the most important one that— I’m sorry. The big one that you raised about availability of data. Yes. The health department, Commissioner [inaudible 01:50:35] and I and the team have actually been discussing over the past two weeks and they are actually working on a website update right now so that there will be more up to date data available at the zip code level publicly. So that hopefully will get addressed very imminently, basically. Now, let’s get to the larger question about when it is appropriate to close schools and when it is not. So, I want to first explain why we chose a three percent threshold in chose to make it a
citywide positivity number as opposed to a neighborhood level. I and then, the second thing I want to get to is about when local restrictions are actually important at the ZIP Code level. So, the reason we initially said a three percent target for citywide is because that would be one metric that we used to think that we are losing sort of the ability to control the epidemic citywide based on the primary measures that we use right now and those can be, basically, clarified as individual social distancing measures like wearing a mask, maintaining physical distance, staying home if you are symptomatic. That’s one set. The second set of measures it is our test and trace program which is a huge and important contributor to reducing transmission and the third tool that we have, our community distancing measures like limiting gatherings. So, we were concerned that if I were citywide test positivity rose above three percent, that it would indicate that we are losing the ability for those measures, as we have been right now, to be able to control the epidemic and that we would need further restrictions, one of which might include the closure of school citywide. Now, the question then
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becomes-- and I know it has been raised many times before-- is why don’t we apply that at the ZIP Code level or at the neighborhood level or however you want to define neighborhoods. And here’s a couple of reasons why not to do that. The first is that, you know, test positivity is an important indicator, but it also, you know, can be problematic if the total sample of your people that you are testing isn’t necessarily represented of that population. So, it is an important indicator and we use it carefully, but, at the same time, it doesn’t necessarily indicate that the small community level at any one time that that is the only thing that you should hinge on. It is very important and I don’t want to deemphasize that. The second is that our schools, as you know, don’t represent-- are not like a rural school district where the vast majority of students and staff and faculty all come from that community in and of itself. So, we have to be cautious about when we use school closures given the fact that, you know, the schools in those communities which may be experiencing high test positivity may not actually draw the majority of the people at risk from that community itself. So, we have to be very cautious
about when we make that decision because there are real harms, as we know, from restricting in person learning. So, now I want to get to the question of why is it that we actually did close schools, for example, in the red and orange sounds have they have been defined by the governor and then, of course, in the ZIP Code proposal that we had before. We made that decision very reluctantly and we did it because we had to-- we decided, based on a number of indicators, the most important one being the consistently high test positivity combined with the clustering of cases in a very concentrated geographic area and-- so that was what the trigger was. Then we responded-- and Dr. Long can go into more detail-- with a very intensive operation to ramp up our testing and tracing activities and very aggressive activities to improve our individual social distancing measures. Observing people with facemask use, going in and inspecting places to make sure that they are following all those measures. And it was only after those measures-- the intensification of individual distancing measures, the intensification of test and trace failed, that we then made the very reluctant decision that we had to
institute stricter community social distancing measures in those communities. So that is, effectively, it returned to pause. And the reason we had to include schools in that at the time was because we had to do anything we count to limit the amount of interaction there is between individuals or between different households in those communities and the challenge with schools is that they either represent, again, in some situations, people from the community meeting together or, more concerningly, people from outside those communities coming into those communities and it was based on a very difficult assessment that, in fact, it had to be included in the group of activities that we were closing in an attempt to minimize the amount of interaction between humans and households. I’ll stop there and, hopefully, I’ve answered your question. I’d be happy to answer more.

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: I appreciate that, but then how are we to understand your criteria for shutting the schools in places where rates are currently rising there outside the hot zones? I mean, I mentioned the South Shore and Staten Island and, as far as we can tell, rates are rising in
several neighborhoods in the Bronx. It sounds like you are not using the three percent criteria in those cases. That is more subjective and, if that's the case, how should parents in those communities, families and those communities, staff in those schools, understand what's ahead in their neighborhoods.

DR. JAY VARMA: Let me clarify again. So, the three percent is a trigger that we need to take more actions. So, the test positivity is an incredibly useful indicator because it allows us to make good comparisons across neighborhoods, but it is not necessarily the trigger that you have to shut everything down in those communities. What you see and what we have been tracking is that, when that test positivity rises above a certain level and stays above that level for a period of time—seven days, 14 days—that that is our trigger to us that we need to take more intensive activities. So, I will give you an example and then Dr. Long can maybe provide some more great examples. We saw this happened in the Tremont section in the Bronx in July. We responded, as I mentioned, by ramping up our community mobilization to promote the individual
social distancing measures and dramatically ramping up our testing and tracing activities. That had a very profound effect on reducing test positivity and allowing us to avoid closing schools and closing businesses. We then saw the same exact phenomenon in Sunset Park. We use that test positivity as our triggered act [inaudible 01:56:58] the community mobilization and the testing trace activities, we brought test positivity down. We followed that exact same model in Borough Park and other parts of southern Brooklyn, but did not see the impact that we wanted, so that’s what led us to it. So, I want to draw a distinction between test positivity being [inaudible 1:57:17] close schools versus using test positivity as an indication that you have to take action and that it is only when those actions fail to take effect that you need to go to the next level of distancing measures. In this is a discussion that you see happening globally and locally throughout the country and the world which is, when do you ramp up and institute community social distancing measures? And the informed consensus is that is what you do when the individual and test and trace measures are not effective.
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DR. TED LONG: I’m happy to add on--

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Please. Please.

DR. TED LONG: oral turned back to you.

If you’d like me to add on, I’d be happy to, otherwise, I will turn it back to you.

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Okay. I was going to move on for time.

DR. TED LONG: That’s fine.

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: The health department this week issued a health alert advising New Yorkers to get tested monthly if they work outside of the home and, specifically, the alert listed teachers and others who work in school buildings. It did not, as far as I could tell, explicitly list students, so I would love, if you could clarify, whether you believe that standard should be applied to students, as well, who are attending in person classes. And, the extent to which you are assessing whether that standard is being met by the students and staff—again, we’re talking about testing they would pursue outside of the randomized testing you are offering. And what, if anything, you are going to do to help achieve that the school communities meet that milestone.
DR. JAY VARMA: Yeah. Let me start briefly and then I am going to pass it over to Ted to talk about this sort of community activities and services. So, just broadly speaking, you know, there is always going to be a Between public health guidance and actual behavior and uptake by individuals. So, we chose a one month interval as the--you know, as the criteria and put out a broad, you know, comment about, you know, categories of people, you know, that fall into it and, essentially, work outside the home, but, particularly, in certain settings because we want to motivate people to actually take advantage of testing that is available. It’s a critical way that we can both monitor the epidemic, as well as control infection. So, we would very much encourage, you know, families to seek out testing for their kids, as well. Of course, again, for minors, there are a couple of important issues. First of all, we know that rates of both symptomatic infections, as well as severe infection are markedly lower in younger children, although those frequencies start to normalize a little bit more as you get to older populations. You know, adolescents and older teenagers. As well as their risk of transmitting
infection and causing rates. So, we don’t feel quite as strongly that, you know, about the need for that guidance to be followed by younger children, but, rather, we would encourage parents if they want to do it, to pursue it and make it available and to discuss that with their pediatricians. Ted, do you want to talk about some of the availabilities of services and access?

DR. TED LONG: Yes. I do. And I think, Chair Levine, you are bringing up a really important point that I want to just say very clearly, for the record, to draw the distinction out here. The random sample survey of students and staff that we are doing at schools is not intended to be a replacement for getting yourself or your family members tested on whatever frequency makes sense after talking to your healthcare provider. We are going to get a certain percentage of everybody at the school as part of our random sample survey. If you are not part of our percentage, of course, you should also go and get tested if you wish to or if your family wishes to. This June 1, we became the first, I believe, big city in the country to have a universal testing recommendation or policy at the
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city level. We want to test everybody and we put out the guidance to help to make it more clear for everybody listening in here. You should be able to look at it and know what your frequency for your testing, what our recommendation would be. We are more than 300 locations across New York City. We, at our sites, offer tests, of course, free of charge. We want to remove all barriers and, again, I just want to make the point that we are doing the random sample in the schools to assess at that point in time the level or the prevalence in the school. It is not intended to supersede parents, teachers, staff, or students or kids coming out in getting tested at whatever frequency in a way that makes sense for them outside of the school.

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Right. But you issued a health alert this week, the Health Department did. This is a very formal help action that you take in very proscribed circumstances. It has a real weight and goes out to thousands of providers. It is an official document and it hasn't been done that often throughout this pandemic. So, that is now the official policy of the city and, if that is the case, then it leads to the question of
what DOE is doing to inform its staff and students of this recommendation to facilitate access to testing resources or to track whether we are achieving that goal. And that might be a question for someone at DOE whether you have engaged on this, whether you are aware of this new health guidance and whether you are incorporating it into your communication with staff and students.

CHANCELLOR CARRANZA: Yes. Thank you, Chairman so, we are incorporating the guidance, as part of our regular communication with our principles in our school buildings. So, what we will do is we will follow up with you and send you what we are sending them.

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Okay. It is clear that many, maybe most, of the tests that are done on students and staff will not be part of the randomized trial for the reasons that Dr. Long has mentioned. And so, that raises the question about our systems for alerting schools when someone in their community tests positive because they go for a routine medical exam, because they have symptoms which lead them to get checked or simply because they wanted to know their status. Explain to us how it is that the
school community will be alerted if someone is part of the school tests positive outside the building.

CHANCELLOR CARRANZA: Yeah. I think that is probably a question for Dr. Varma or Dr. Long.

DR. JAY VARMA: You. Let me get started and then I can pass it over to Ted and Danny to add in. So, the way the notification occurs is-- so, first of all, just for everybody’s backgrounds, so that they understand, the different ways in which a test result can get reported to the situation room, which is the unit that takes action, there is a couple of different data streams. The first would be through the standard reporting mechanism which is that any time a laboratory performs a test on a New York City resident, it is required by law that that get reported through an electronic system that is maintained by the state. Through that state system, it immediately comes to the city health department and it gets routed immediately to the test and trace corps which Linda’s interviews and that would be one pathway in which they would find out that, you know, as part of the interview, that it is the child going to a public school or a staff member. The second way in which test results get reported is, of course,
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directly from the person themselves. Either the students [inaudible 2:04:530], the staff for the teacher, notifying either the principal or somebody within this health community in the Test and Trace Corps or the health department directly. Again, those reports then have to get verified because, again, they are in individual report and that is all managed through the situation room. And then the situation room will then take actions about first on the decision about whether a classroom needs to be closed and, second of all, whether a building needs to be closed and sending out letters of exposure to those who are potentially exposed and letters about lawn exposure to those who weren’t. So, maybe, let me pass it over to Ted or Danny, then, to get into the specifics about how those letters go out and who communicates them.

DR. TED LONG: Yeah. I’ll give you one fact and then I’m going to pass this to Dr. Stephens who is, of course, in the situation room. So, who better to comment on how the situation room works than him live? There’s been 283 classrooms closed and that just the way that we get data and the ways that Jay was saying and how we were able to take
quick, decisive, and clear action with communication for each of those and it has only resulted, from those, a small fraction of buildings actually needing to be closed. Which, again, speaks to the effectiveness and rapidity that the situation room is currently operating under. Danny, I will turn to you for some more details.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER STEPHENS: Sure.

The only thing that I would add is, to Chair Treyger’s point earlier, it is accurate information and making sure that information gets into the hands of the school community. So, at its communicating, it is letters sent out to principals. It is calls to principals and school leaders. But getting those tools in their hands to then spread that throughout the school community to parents, to staff, to families, and to all stakeholders. And so, it is that information flow, but, specifically to your question, the output of the situation room is intended to be disseminated broadly throughout the school community and invested stakeholders.

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: That raises the question of when a child or a staff member tests positive, you have to initiate contact tracing. How
far back are you looking to check for contacts? I imagine it is particularly a challenge if someone is asymptomatic, which kids usually are, thankfully, because you don’t have the onset of symptoms as a marker to determine when someone could be contagious. So, people are only getting tested once a month, you’re not going to catch all new cases the moment they emerge. How are you determining how far back to look for purposes of contact tracing?

DR. JAY VARMA: Ted, do you want to--

DR. TED LONG: Actually, Danny, why don’t you start with just-- and this is just the flow of things to Chair Levine’s point-- with how the situation room looks at classroom closures every time we have a positive case and then a layer on top of that-- the contact tracing which we do in addition to what Danny is about to tell you about.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER STEPHENS: Sure. So, to Dr. Varma’s point earlier with a variety of ways that information can be reported to the situation, whether that be a positive report, whether that be through lab data, whether that be through a principal, whether that be through documentation. To your point, Chair Levine, we follow closely the CDC
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guidance to determine the infectious. Meaning, right, if someone presents with symptoms trying to go back and determine the period in which that individual may be infectious or contagious to others, as well as there is a similar process to determine the infectious. For someone who is tested who is asymptomatic who that— or presymptomatic or someone who does not have symptoms. Taking that period, we then determined where we need to start to ask questions or look for close contacts. And that is part of the, to Councilman’s Treyger’s point earlier, is the beauty of having Test and Trace and DOH and DOE all in the same place under the great leadership of Commissioner La Rocca, is for all of us and for different agencies to work together to ask those questions quickly and determined those timeframes quickly and quickly initiate the test and tracing process.

DR. TED LONG: Yeah. And brass tacks to your point, Chair Levine, 48 hours is our gold standard. Now, what happens is just to walk you through— because I think this is an important point— if there is a positive case, it starts in the situation room, as Danny said, the classroom or
pod will be identified and then everybody in that classroom or pod will be going out on quarantine for 14 days no matter what, no questions. That’s the golden rule that never changes. Then, on top of that, we do our contact tracing to identify additional close contacts because the positive student or teacher may have potentially exposed people outside of the school. That’s why our current contact tracing needs to exist on top of the situation room. But the situation room’s action is instantaneous. There’s no need to wait. The pod is going to quarantine for 14 days no matter what. Then we do contact tracing on top of that and then, if there is another case in the school or if that is the second case, that is where considerations of potentially closing the building for 24 hours comes into play.

CHANCELLOR CARRANZA: Chairman Levine?
CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Please, Mr. Chancellor.

CHANCELLOR CARRANZA: Yes. I just want to add to what my colleagues have said. So, earlier in our testimony, Chair Treyger raised a concern of a school safety agent. I just want to lift up as an
example of how the situation n room supports schools.
So, it was the principal that called us and said, I’m hearing that the agent that tested positive, made that report. We were able to do the detective work in the situation room to verify that which then also identified the miscommunication or the breakdown in communication between NYPD and DOE and we were very quickly able to get to the bottom of that case. The beauty of having a one stop shop where everybody associated is there, it is a tremendous assistance to not only do the detective work, but getting information to the school, the school community, including letters and emails and all of the communication. Just wanted to lift that as an example.

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Thank you. And I just want to acknowledge a few Council members who have joined us who I don’t believe we mentioned earlier which is Council members Van Bramer, Levin, and Cornegy. I do want to ask about ventilation because this is a disease that we really now do understand is airborne. Some of the standard measures for ventilation in a classroom or any room are levels of CO2 or the air circulation rate, the
number of times in our in which airflow cycles in and
out of a given room. Aware that information is made
public, classroom by classroom basis. I don’t think
parents have the ability to see any kind of measures
for the child’s classroom. Could you update us on
the extent to which you are taking such measures and
whether and how a parent and staff, for that matter,
can you check these readings for their room?

CHANCELLOR CARRANZA: Sure. So, I will
start and then I am going to ask Kevin Moran and also
John Shea to add some more detail about this. So,
again, when I spoke in my testimony, there are tens
of thousands of rooms that have been looked at and
walked through the work that happened to make sure
that there is ventilation. It’s a massive
undertaking, so what we’ve done is we have started to
put that together so that we can publicly show what
the statuses of those particular rooms and the room
flow. Now that we have people in the rooms, we’re
able to actually use a CO2 monitors to be able to do
air quality work and look at the air quality in every
school has a CO2 device and that’s about where my
expertise ends. So, I will ask Kevin or John to give
us some more detail.
KEVIN MORAN: Sure. Thank you, Council member Levine. Ventilation is always a part of a multi-pronged approach to reduce any transmission of COVID-19 and other airborne viruses. The idea at the onset is to reduce any aerosol in the classroom environment or a school environment. And so, we align that with the CDC’s guidance. We actually encourage windows to be opened, all of our exhaust systems to be assessed and functioning. All of our corrected error intakes to be assessed for their functioning and the same with these units and handlers in the classroom. So, we’re looking at the systems in our building as designed to be operable and functioning knowing that they were designed for 100 percent occupancy of students and knowing that we are roughly around 30 percent of student occupancy and potentially lower in some instances. So, what the Chancellor said, we are providing or have provided facilities with a CO2 reader so they can assess airflow within classes. If the classroom has [inaudible 02:14:24] we will provide air purifiers. For schools with HVAC systems or much larger systems, we are providing the MER-13 filter which is also a CDC recommendation to make sure it is removing
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particulate matters in the air. We are also opening
windows before classrooms and in the evenings to
release any [inaudible 02:14:44] bio burden from
classrooms. So, our assessments by the School
Construction Authority [inaudible 02:14:49] were
taken at the end of the summer to assess all the
progresses to date, post it online for each family to
see room by room the operability. That will be
updated every Friday and, if there are any concerns
locally, parents can talk with their principal and
school custodians for the latest information at the
school level. But this is part of a multi-pronged
approach to ensure that, again, we do not have
infectious particulates in the schools and that
happens by pre-screening. I’m a former public school
teacher and a parent now and with my two kids, we did
the [inaudible 02:15:22] this morning, so it starts
with parents not sending any kids to school with any
symptoms. Ultimately, our testing approach to ensure
that we are testing students to make sure they are
not infectious or, you know, asymptomatic and
potentially spreading unknown. The mandatory mask
wearing is, obviously, mandatory and we’re going to
control any aerosols from an infected student, if
present. The hand hygiene and all the other recommendations the CDC has offered, we are following and our schools are introducing 100 percent fresh air to make sure that we’re doing everything we can to make sure that our students and staff members are safe. We are working with our principles, and with our teachers and custodians. So, if there are localized questions, those answers reside on our website if anybody wants to know the status of a room, but we will not use a classroom if there is not ventilation present in there. So, we will make sure that the repairs are made. We have 2800 classrooms identified at the end of the summer. We are down to the last 200 that need repairs. I would also add we have order 30,00 HEPA indoor air purifiers. We’ve already received 15,000 of those of which they are all placed in nurses’ offices and isolation rooms. So, if you have any questions--

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Thank you. I’m just going ask one final question because we do have colleagues that are patiently waiting. It’s about community schools and I don’t know whether the director Chris Caruso is still with us, but community schools are just essential in the services they
provide are not luxury items. They really are critical to the health and well-being of students and families and even to educational achievement. And they have sustained real cuts this school year. I’m concerned about relationships with community-based partners being severed. That really is one of the key ingredients of a successful community schools. Could you please talk to us about the plan to maintain community schools, to maintain CBO relationships during this pandemic?

CHANCELLOR CARRANZA: Thank you, Chair and then I will ask Mr. Caruso to join. I saw him on. So, I am a big, big supporter of community schools. I did that when I was superintendent in San Francisco and Houston also. I started a community schools and, New York City, New York City has been at the forefront of the community school’s movement for decades. Obviously, with an austere budget, there were challenges with the budget, but I also wanted to publicly thank Chairman Treyger who is pledged to help us find the funding and restore the funding. So, thank you, Chairman Treyger. I know he is a big supporter of community schools, as well. We have also really looked and found some additional funding
to restore as much as we can and I want to echo what Chairman Treyger said about the responsibility of the state of New York and the federal government. We cannot continue to support learning in America in our public schools if the federal government does not step up and recognize that we have a pandemic. In this is one of those examples of how are our community-based partners have really been part of the fabric of keeping social emotional learning in wraparound services and health services and mental health services in place for our most vulnerable students in New York City. So, we’re going to stop at nothing to try to make sure that our community schools we can restore to pre-COVID funding levels, but, at this point, it is very challenging and why I am very grateful for the support of the City Council in helping us to do that. Chris, are you on the call?

CHRISTOPHER CARUSO: I am, Chancellor.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak for a moment. Chairman Levine, thank you for your steadfast support of community schools and our students and, Chairman Treyger, same to you. I know you’ve been a huge advocate for this work. Since that time the pandemic
struck, our community schools have really stepped up and partnerships between nonprofit organizations to forge relationships with families and schools have really helped many of our most vulnerable students adapt, get connected to food security, technology, and the basic supports that students need to thrive. We also have a lot of evidence in the success of community schools and so, you know, battling through these tough financial times, it has been really difficult and I am so appreciative of the patients and work that our nonprofit organizations have done across the city and supporting principles and families and teachers and students during this time. As the Chancellor said, we have been working really hard to find resources. We made a commitment to all of our nonprofit organizations and community schools that any expenses they have incurred during this time of uncertainty would, of course, be reimbursed and we are working really hard to get some more clarity on the budget situation as soon as possible. And thank you, again, for all your support in this work.

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Thank you, Chris. We have to get this money restored for the good of the kids, first and foremost. For the communities,
for the CVS. And I will certainly be joining with Chair Treyger with Council colleagues to fight for that. I’m going to wrap it up now. Thank you to the administration for this discussion and I think I’m going to cue Malcolm, our committee counsel, to work through the cue of our colleagues. Thanks, again.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yeah. I’m going to switch to Council member questions now, but Chair Treyger had one quick follow up question for First Deputy Chancellor Conyers. If we could go ahead and unmute the First Deputy Chancellor? Chair Treyger, he’s unmuted. You can ask your question.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you very much and I do want to just note for the record I was a strong supporter of both community schools and of the learning to work critical programs that serve as these children who actually need to support more than ever and it is unconscionable that we are going to fight like hell to restore every dime to both community schools and learning to work. And I think my colleague for raising this. This is a top priority for us. I just wanted to quickly follow up before we turned our colleagues with the question that I posed to the First Deputy Chancellor to make
sure that we have the entire question wrapped up so we get all the data that we need. I asked about what percentage of schools are providing in person services by having students log into zoom from the classroom. I just want to make sure that we also get the number of what is the actual staff shortage number because this is a direct result and impact of the hybrid model that requires more staff at a time when we have fewer staff working in school buildings. So, what is the number that we are short by to provide in-person instruction to every single child who signed up for in person services? In the final note, Deputy Chancellor, since we are experiencing the severe staff shortages, one of the first things that comes to my mind in addition the promises made to kids is a legal mandate that we have two kids. The percentage of students that are not receiving their full IEP mandates as a result of that staffing shortage, as well. Do you have that information with you available or do you have to get back to us?

FIRST DEPUTY CHANCELLOR CONYERS: We will have to get that back to you, sir. And I think you for the clarification on these three aspects and we will get back to you shortly on that.
CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: It’s very important. Thank you, Deputy Chancellor. I will turn it over to Malcolm to begin the queue.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. The first few Council members that we have lined up will be Council member Kallos followed by Council member Lander, followed by Council member Holden. And there are others that will be following, but we will first start with Council member Kallos.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: Thank you. You get unlimited time. I’ve got five minutes. So, I’ve got six questions. You know the drill. Pencils out. Chancellor Carranza, I know you know how much I care about childcare. As we have fought to reopen with students learning remotely with two, three, or every day of the week, it became clear that we would need somewhere they could do so with adult supervision. That’s why I proposed remote learning centers in the letter on July 10th and was pleased with your announcement of adopting the model through learning bridges. I was, however, concerned when only 100,000 seats were announced and asked for more in a letter with Council member Lander on July 23rd. We just
learned that I have one site in my district with 60
seats to serve nine elementary schools had more than
4000 students. Will you open a site on Roosevelt
Island with an MWBE provider that we have identified?
Will you open more sites in my district and
throughout the borough of Manhattan which only got
128 sites for 336 schools? Question two. While many
schools with the hybrid model have a minimum of two
days with three days on alternating weeks, I actually
have schools alternating between one and two days a
week with class sizes as low as six students. Can we
guarantee a minimum of two and three days a week for
every school in the city? Question three. You know
how I feel about the purchase of 300,000 iPads that
did not offer keyboards or even broadband hunting and
pecking out 100 word essays on a screen. Borough
president Brewer and I have allocated millions to
purchase laptops, speaking for myself, for every
school in my district. But now schools are being
blocked on the ground that kids can’t take the
laptops home when they need them most. I even
secured 1499 a month broadband and now free broadband
for these families. Will you release or millions for
schools to buy these laptops that connects families
with this free broadband? Question four. On June 29, I joined [inaudible 02:25:44] banks to propose 84 million dollars in savings by phasing out our racist textbooks that too often perpetuate notions of white supremacy through a narrow focus on the achievements of white men in Europe. Expanding the narrative through open textbooks can help teach the rich diversity of shared contributions across culture from Arabic numerals and Catherine Johnson in math to [inaudible 02:26:07] and George Washington Carver in science. Key figures and developments have been neglected in every subject, not only history. Will you join me in rooting out injustice in the class? Racial injustice in the classroom and adopt open education resources or open text books and move towards and more culturally responsive, adaptive, and digital learning that will help all of our students succeed no matter their zip code or their gender or the color of their skin? Question five. In August 7th, I joined black, Latino, and Asian-- for Black, Latino, and Asian co-chair Robert Cornegy in asking if we could desegregate online education for the several hundred thousand-- I think 400,00 students who chose to remote entirely online with a citywide
online class free of being restrained by physicality and the racist red lining that we’ve been dealing with even to this day. We could finally desegregate the program, offer GNT to anyone who offered it citywide. The New York Post even endorsed this idea.

Sixth and final question. Last year, you missed the deadline to implement GPS tracking for school buses for parents, but promised to have it rolled out by this school year. Now, more important than ever for parents to know where the children are, when will you roll out this program? Along the same lines, I’ve been in communication with the parent of a student with autism whose bus driver tested positive for coronavirus on October 6th, but was not notified until a full seven days later, putting the child, family, other students, and staff and even the school at rest what went wrong and how long should it take?

CHANCELLOR CARRANZA: Okay. Thank you. I’ll start with the last one first. GPS tracking. Pandemic. Pandemic. That’s what happened. So, we are on track to-- We are back on track to roll out the via tracking that will give parents the functionality, but let me just remind everyone there is a pandemic. We shut down the school system. We
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shifted to remote learning. That is what happened. So, I just want to be very clear. We are also very committed to making sure that parents have the information they need to know where the children are and make sure that they are safe. Kevin, did you want to add a little more detail to when—Kevin Moran, what is the new timeline for our via implementation? Kevin Moran, if you could meet him, please?

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Can we please unmute Kevin Moran?

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: There we go.

KEVIN MORAN: Yeah. So, honestly, in March, the COVID shutdown impacted directly our supply chains for the units that we will be installing on buses. So, we needed 10,000 units coming out of China. That [inaudible 02:29:07] directly impacted. Also, project plans due to the shutdown was significantly delayed. And so, when you look at providing GPS, there is a fair amount of training that has to go involved in actually using the system. And so, with the bus companies down through the summer, we had no opportunity to, one,
install the devices, do any quality control of the devices, to do any systems integration over that time period. So, yes. We are delayed, but are committed to getting that back on track. More to come on that, but we have been talking directly to the CEO of via and we are very excited to get everything lined back up where we can actually do the testing of the units on the buses and then, ultimately, having to interact with our school systems. So, yes. Definitely more to come on that, Councilman. We will get back to you on a more definitive timeline.

COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: When a bus driver or other DOE staff tests positive for coronavirus, is it supposed to take seven days to tell a child and their family about?

KEVIN MORAN: I don’t know the case you’re speaking about. I don’t know if the test results are shared. If they are shared, we immediately take the driver off the run and make those notifications with the school. If it’s necessary, we’ll shut down the run. If the determination on the Test and Trace is that it’s okay to redeploy the route absent the driver and attendant, we’ll do that. Each case is different. I don’t know the case you are speaking
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about, but if you shared it with me, I could give you
[inaudible 02:30:31] when you get it to me.

COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOWS: We will get it to you. The rest of the questions, Chancellor?

CHANCELLOR CARRANZA: Yeah. So,
culturally relevant curriculum, absolutely. We, as
the Department of Education have taken a strong stand
on culturally relevant and sustaining curriculum.
That should not be any different as we are in a
virtual environment, as well. We are continuing to
work to make all of the materials and all of the
curriculum that our students engage with culturally
relevant and sustaining. That is not going away at
all during this time period. In terms of minimum two
or three days for blended learning, we are in the
process right now of recalibrating what is happening
with our in person learning. Now, if you remember,
when we did our survey back in April in terms of
asking families are you choosing remote learning, the
default was that, if they didn’t indicate a
preference for remote learning, it was assumed that
that they were choosing to be in a blended learning
environment. Now, that students have actually come
back, we know that more families have chosen a remote
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learning environment which, again, has made it so
that class sizes are even smaller than what we can
medically, safely, have in our schools and schools
are starting the process now of reconfiguring their
classes and reallocating their teachers so that they
have teachers that can have two or three more
students and then the staffing shortage isn’t as
great as it was when we were first planning with all
these students that were going to be in a remote
oriented person learning environment. What we have
also seen is that schools are also able to then tweak
their models so that they can offer more days of in
person learning due to the smaller number of students
that have chosen in person learning. The caveat that
I would add here, though, is that there will be
another opportunity that will come for parents and
students to opt back in to in-person learning. So, a
student right now has two days of in person learning.
Because of the numbers, the school may be able to
reprogram and they may be able to get four or five
days of in person learning and then, with this next
window coming within the next four or five weeks,
then if more, significantly more families choose in
person learning, the school will have to re-program again and that family that has now five days of in person learning may have one or two days of in person learning again. We don’t want to do that to families, so we are trying to be, and working with our schools, very, very deliberate and communicative with families around what those tweaks are going to look like. I will say, Council member Kallos, that our goal is always to the greatest extent possible, to have the most in person learning days for students that have chosen that modality. In terms of the money for laptops, I know our chief financial officer is on the line. Lindsay Oates. If you could please unmute Lindsay Oates, she can talk to you about the issue on money for laptops.

LINDSAY OATES: Thank you, sir.

Figure for the question, Council member Kallos. So, I believe what you are referring to is what we call Reso A funding. That funding was released several weeks ago and we have been communicating with schools and supporting them in purchasing those devices. So, I am happy to report that, after being stuck for a little bit, it is out there and schools are
absolutely ordering devices and other school-based equipment that they need to support instruction.

COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: Great.

CHANCELLOR CARRANZA: And then the question on learning bridges, I’m going to ask Josh Wallack and Susan Haskell to address that issue for us, please.

JOSH WALLACK: I can say simply that Susan and I would be very happy to work with you, Council member to look at the site that you pointed out on Roosevelt Island and, if providers are interested, they can apply on passport. But happy to touch base with your office and learn about the specific suggestions. We do want to stand up as many seats in all parts of New York City as possible. We are also emphasizing standing up seats first in neighborhoods that were particularly hard-hit by the pandemic. So, we are trying to balance this, but we would like to work with you and look at the sites that you have in mind.

COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: Thank you.

Chancellor, the last question was about desegregating the online education.
CHANCELLOR CARRANZA: Yes. So, let’s talk more about what that means in this virtual environment. And I will reference the letter, as well. But just I’d like to get a little more information as to what exactly we are talking about.

COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: It would be offering students a chance to disengage with their current local public school provider of their choice and then join a citywide class. The classes could be oriented around enrichment, a dual language program, give them talented—because it could be scalable, it could literally just offer the kids whatever they wanted very similar to some of the STAG recommendations on what you’ve been pushing for and so just creating a space where the kids can opt in, the kids could be integrated across the entire city and across classroom and it even be sorted based on their preferred learning style. Some kids liking it to be live in eight hours a day versus other kids who just want the homework assignments and what have you.

CHANCELLOR CARRANZA: Got it. Thank you, Council member. Obviously, a lot to talk about including some potential labor issues. So, that is the kind of detail that I think our team should
engage in a conversation about. But happy to do that.

COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: Thank you. And thank you to the Chairs indulgence with all the questions.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. And next we will go to Council member Lander. Remembering, everyone, there is five minutes for Council member questions.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Okay. Thank you very much and to the Chairs for this important hearing. Chair Treyger and Chair Levine and, Chancellor and your team, it is good to see you. Time allowing, I’m hoping to ask questions for a little more details on learning bridges, on outdoor learning, and on admissions for next year, but I want to start with a pretty specific question. DOE has imposed a new policy for extended use permits that’s having a devastating impact on afterschool programs and many schools. Huge new fees that are making it impossible for schools to operate their own afterschool programs and you have exempted DYCD and DOE funded programs, but you have made it impossible
for programs operated by the schools, many of which have internal scholarship opportunities for low income families and are absolutely essential for working families, have been forced to close. DOE suggests this is because of the additional cleaning costs when afterschool providers use the space, but, then, in your own communication, you have made clear that no extra cleaning is happening between the end of the school day and the start of afterschool. Security and cleaning is already scheduled around after school, so there is no schedule change. There is just no reason to hike the fees other than revenue generation and you are making childcare costs prohibitive at a time when we’ve got to be doing everything we can to provide childcare to working parents. So, I want to ask if you will agree right now to reverse this policy so our afterschool programs can operate for working families?

CHANCELLOR CARRANZA: Thank you, Council member. I’m going to ask our chief financial officer to talk. Lindsay Oates to talk about the need for the fee adjustments.

COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: I don’t want to hear about the need for fee adjustments, so, Lindsay,
if you will say yes, you are going to reverse the policy, that would be great. But I would wish you don’t use any of my time to tell me that you are actually using it for cleaning that is not actually extra cleaning taken place.

LINDSAY OATES: Council member Lander, I would be happy to discuss this with you off-line so we don’t use the time now to the discuss this if that is your preference. I can’t commit that we are going to reverse these fees, but I do want to correct, for the record that DYCD and other city agencies that provide afterschool programs are not exempt from this. We are working with out-- there is an increase cost that they are paying to support these increase cleaning costs.

COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Do you have any clue how many afterschool programs have been forced to close by the new fees?

LINDSAY OATES: I do not. I think that there are lots of decisions made by schools about afterschool programs right now, not the least of which is fees.

COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Okay. Lindsay, I would like to follow up with you off-line, but this
is a devastating policy. It makes no sense. It doesn’t cost the city money. These are afterschool programs providing working families desperately needed childcare and is taking action that forces them to close is counter production. Anyway, so I will follow up with you off-line, but I really hope you will reconsider this. It’s just a bad decision for New York’s families right now. All right. So, the questions I would love to put out there that are more general-- it was great to your little bit about learning bridges which I know it is wonderful to have stood up. I would love to hear a little bit more the details. Maybe I miss them, but I didn’t hear before how many slots are there, where are they? How many requests from families? How many offers and how many offers accepted? And how many of those are teachers and school staff and essential workers? On outdoor learning, I’ve seen some amazing pictures from principals and teachers and school staff, so I would just want to get the data. How many schools? How many closed streets? How many parks? And then my last question is about admissions. As you know, Chancellor and Deputy Chancellor Wallack, we have been pushing, especially seeing how well the district
15 model is going, that we cannot use last fall’s fourth grade grades and test scores. There are just meaningless. When are the admissions decisions for next year going to get made and communicated to families and where are we, especially, on middle school admissions where we have a model we could just use for one year citywide in this pandemic to try something that will actually help us move forward on desegregation, but also just makes sense given the realities of the pandemic?

CHANCELLOR CARRANZA: Okay. So, on learning bridges, I’m going to ask again, Josh and Susan if you would mind. Josh Wallack and Susan Haskell? If you could unmute them, please?

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: You’re unmuted--

SUSAN HASKELL: Okay. Thank you for your question. This is Susan Haskell, Deputy Commissioner of youth services at the Department of Youth and Community Development. We have been ripping up this initiative to help support families and DOE students enrolled in blended learning. I know, as of my last data point, we had more than 45,000 families who had gone to the DOE website who were eligible to participate in learning bridges. We
are excited about that and we want to continue to encourage families to go to the DOE website who are interested in this childcare program and express their application there. We have more--

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired.

SUSAN HASKELL: We have more than 300 programs operational right now matched with a roughly 500 schools and we look forward to sharing more data. I’m sure some of that has been updated as recently as today. We look forward to continuing to share more data points about the participation in learning bridges.

COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Can you just tell us when we could expect to see some numbers about number of slots and offers and, you know, the kinds of things that we would rather not subpoena. If you could just tell us when you are going to give us the information.

SUSAN HASKELL: Yeah. No problem. We have exceeded our initial goal of 30,000 seats to be available when school opened. We are in our second full week of programming and we are, at the same time, you know, connecting our providers with attendance systems for the K to eight programs, DYCD
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programs. This is sort of a new administrative experience for them to be reporting daily attendance each morning. And so, I think, additionally, we had maybe 75 percent of programs and that first week of programs who still needed to, you know, get used to that system. We have brought that down to under 25 percent and we hope to have everybody fluid with that system by the end of this week. And so, again, we should be able to give you more updates week to week as time goes by.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you very much. Thank you, Council member Lander. And, Malcolm, who is next on the queue?

COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Chair, I’m sorry. You can skip my outdoor learning question, but can you make sure that the admission decisions question gets answered? That really feels like it’s important for us to hear in this time.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Go ahead. I’m sorry.

CHANCELLOR CARRANZA: Yeah. We are working through the final details of the admissions process. So, we will have more to say very, very soon about that.
COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Thank you. Mr. Chair?

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: And next we will hear from Council member Levin followed by Council member Cohen and Council member Salamanca.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Thank you very much, Chair. I have my son here with me, so bear with me for a moment, please. I’d like to first ask about-- I have questions around students and shelter. So, Chancellor, you responded to Chair Treyger’s question mentioning that there were sim cards that were changed out from T-Mobile to Verizon. My understanding is that that it happened at one shelter after months of advocates and shelters raising the issue. There may be a second shelter today. Can we get a commitment from you that we can-- that every shelter should have access to Verizon some cards because of issues around his body T-Mobile service?

CHANCELLOR CARRANZA: Absolutely. So, it is actually 10 shelters that are on our list and, if we use 10 shelters, the teams have been going in and actually checking. Not just in the lobby, not just
in gathering areas, but going throughout the building to get an assessment of whether or not there is spotty connectivity. In the cases where there is, then you’ve identified the provider. So, in the cases where there are spotty connections, they physically change out those Sim cards, rather than doing a cloud-based switchover because we want to make sure that the connectivity is strong. So, there are 10 shelters that are on our list. They will all be done by next week. So, you’re going to see a regular cadence of that happening. But, in addition to that call will I mean, some cards is one thing, but in working with our sister agencies in the city, we are also working on a broader plan to actually address Wi-Fi connectivity and no shelter so that we can ensure that there is no need for some card, but that there is actually conductivity in terms of Wi-Fi. So, that is part of a broader strategy there, but our first goal is to make sure that the students there have the connectivity that they need right now to be able to participate.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: But, Chancellor, there’s more than 10 shelters with students in the city, so I just want to make sure that every
shelter-- every student in shelter that’s having issues with connectivity, can have access to a Verizon some card. Is that right?

CHANCELLOR CARRANZA: Let me clarify. Thank you, Council member. So, we are starting with 10 shelters that have been identified by advocates and others as the most problematic.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Okay.

CHANCELLOR CARRANZA: That, by no means, implies that we are stopping there. We are [inaudible 02:46:51]

COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Okay. Okay. Do we know how many students and shelter have not engaged in school this year, whether in person or remotely? Are we keeping track of that?

CHANCELLOR CARRANZA: I know we are. I’m going to ask our First Deputy Chancellor LaShawn Robinson if she has the details. LaShawn Robinson. If you can unmute her, please.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: You are unmuted now.

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR ROBINSON: Thank you so much. Chancellor, we have Chris Caruso on who oversees both students and shelter along with
attendance. And I believe he has that information available.

CHRISTOPHER CARUSO: Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Mr. Caruso, you are unmuted.

CHRISTOPHER CARUSO: Thank you very much. Thank you, Deputy Commissioner Robinson.

Council member, I don’t have the numbers at hand for this current year, but I do know for last school year when we switched to remote, there were 119 students who were living in shelter who did not engaged with schools during the remote learning. I’m sure we can pull-- I might have it in my stack of papers here. I can look and I’m sure we can pull that number for this year year to date quickly.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Okay. And I also have another question around who is in charge of students and shelter making sure that all of these issues are addressed on a day-to-day basis but there is a point person that providers, shelter providers and/or advocates like Advocates for Children can go to? Is there a point person? Would that be you, Chris, or who would be the point person?
CHRISTOPHER CARUSO: Would you like for me to answer that, Chancellor?

CHANCELLOR CARRANZA: Yes. Yes. Go ahead.

CHRISTOPHER CARUSO: Okay. Thank you.

CHANCELLOR CARRANZA: Deputy Chancellor Robinson, as well, to chime in. LaShawn Robinson.

CHRISTOPHER CARUSO: Great. I’m happy to start and then Deputy Chancellor Robinson--

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired.

CHRISTOPHER CARUSO: So, supporting our students in temporary housing is a multiagency effort, right? We know that children and families--not just those living in shelter, but most of our children and families interact with multiple public systems. We just heard the example of DYCD and afterschool programs, as well. So, at the end of the day, principles are responsible for supporting the students who are enrolled in their schools. The Department of Education does everything we can to support principals who have high numbers of students who are living in shelter and so, we have an office of student contemporary housing within the division of school climate and wellness. We have staff on the
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ground in schools. The bridging the gap social workers which the Council has been such a vocal advocate to make sure that the mental health needs of our students in temporary housing are addressed are key among them. We also have 117 staff that actually work in shelters and work arm in arm with the shelter directors. So, when we deploy the technology last spring it in this fall, we were able to shift the technology directly to the shelters because we had staff on the ground to help the shelter operators distribute that to the families. So, I hope that provides some clarity in terms of the relationship between DHS and DOE and how--

COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: And if I could just--

CHRISTOPHER CARUSO: there are supported.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Chair, if I could just respond there really quickly. What would be really helpful for me as the Chair of General Welfare and, I think, for advocates and providers, if we could has, in addition to all of that, a high level point person so that, when there are specific issues that arise we can go-- we have somebody at Tweed,
whether it is you or Deputy Chancellor Robinson or I don’t know who that we can say we have an issue here. We have a Sim card that needs to be replaced here. You know, really specific issues that need to get addressed immediately, that there is a point person that we can all go to that everybody knows it is there and that would be very, very helpful for, I think, everybody within the homelessness advocacy and provider community.

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR ROBINSON: Absolutely. You can feel free to reach out to me directly. Deputy Chancellor LaShawn Robinson and Chris Caruso with the office of community schools as the senior executive director. That body of work certainly falls within the division and is housed within the office of community schools. So, please, feel free to reach out directly.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Okay. I will do that. Thank you very much.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Council member Holden, you dropped off, but you are back on, so you were originally before Council member Levin, so we will go to Council member Holden who is back on
If we can unmute Council member Holden. There we go. You’re all set.

COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: I didn’t drop off. I was on the whole. I don’t know unless there was a technical problem. This is for Deputy Commissioner Haskell and, you know, I do want to hear more about learning bridges. The stats, especially. And, if your office can get the Council members a breakdown by school district of the slots for the learning bridges, I would appreciate it. You don’t have to answer that now, but my other question is-- and it is for anybody. Our children with IEP’s or receiving the services or SETSS, Special Education Teacher Support Services, getting their services they desperately need if they are only in school two days a week or sometimes even one day a week? I got many parents frustrated at online SETSS is not working for their children along with occupational therapy, speech, obviously, and language therapy.

CHANCELLOR CARRANZA: So, Council member, we have John Hammer from our special education department. If he can be on muted, he can address that question.
JOHN HAMMER: Hi, Council member Holden.

It’s John Hammer here from the special education office. Thank you, Chancellor, and thank you for the question. So, special education office has worked to develop two documents to support families in understanding how both program services and related services will be delivered in blended and remote learning. The first is the programs adaptations document which really is designed to facilitate a conversation between the child’s teacher. The SETSS provider, the ICT teach, the special class teacher that is servicing that student, to talk about how the services we provided in blended learning environment and to really get feedback and input from the family and how to best provide these services during this time. And in some cases, SETSS services can absolutely be provided effectively remotely and we would like to work with the family in order to schedule all those. In some cases, that may not be the case and so that process is the vehicle for us to be working with families in order to iron that out.

Similarly, our related service providers are conducting outreach. Our speech occupational therapists, and physical therapists, to complete a
document called the related services adaptation document, or the RAD. And during that process, our related service providers are speaking with families around the provision of in person services until the therapy services to really work with families in order to build a service delivery model that is going to work best for their students during this time. And so, we encourage any family who has been working with their related service provider or special education teacher to complete these PADs and RADs to continue to do so and reach out to the school’s principal if there aren’t any roadblocks.

COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Okay. While I have you on, if parents need their children evaluated for services, how long will that take? Because, in a regular school year, this process could take months and, you know, obviously, we are in a pandemic and, I imagine, it is even longer. So, could parents be allowed to get their children evaluated from an outside source and will it be accepted by a DOE?

JOHN HAMMER: Absolutely. It should be done within 60 days, right? In our school psychologists are absolutely working with families and providing evaluations through a comprehensive,
data-driven assessment process which we rolled out in the spring. Families have concerns around the evaluation process, they should speak to the child’s principal or email us at special@schools.nyc.gov.

COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: on the air quality and so forth. And this could go to anybody, again, in DOE. Have you reached out to various companies who provide high-tech technologies like UV light, air filtration, ionization technology, and have the RFPs gone out?

CHANCELLOR CARRANZA: So, Kevin Moran will give you lots of detail. John Shea, as well. So, Kevin Moran and John Shea. The short answer to that, Council member, is yes, but they can talk a little bit more detail about who and what.

KEVIN MORAN: Yeah. We’ve engaged with several companies on products that we believe enhance air quality. And so, the indoor air purifies, you’ll hear more about it potentially later in the [inaudible 02:56:53] unit. We also have what is the most important [inaudible 02:56:58] filters. We’ve partnered up with an international HVAC expert to make sure that we can complete that order and keep
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that supply chain moving. So, we’ve very excited about that. We have our own contractor, as well, that we used readily. Having taken a good hard look at anything beyond that with the UV lighting scenario, we’ve talked about it. We’ve talked to other agencies that have used it. Currently, we are not moving in that direction. We are looking at the MER-13 filtration system and the HEPA rated indoor air purifier as the next step. We are not closing the door on that technology. Just know that we are committed to the MER-13 filtration and indoor air purifier right now. I don’t know, John, if you have anything to add on to any of the other conversations around ionization.

JOHN SHEA: I will just add— And thank you, Council member Holden, for the questions. We’ve been doing a lot of work since the pandemic started with the Council of Great City Schools which is the national organization that supports the major urban school districts across the country to see what they are doing, as well and we keep in close touch on what kind of technologies and we share information about that. So, to reinforce what Kevin said, you have the as the technology is not something that we think is
appropriate for us at this time. The air purifier
certainly are and we are constantly reevaluating that
stuff. Not doing it in a vacuum, but in a very
public and very broad spectrum.

COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Because certain
ionization's that have been proven throughout the
world and so, you know, as the Chair of technology,
we have heard-- you know, I sat on a number of zoom
meetings with a number of companies and I would be
happy to offer some insight into that if you guys
need it. But, there's many, many solutions and,
obviously, you know, companies are coming out of the
woodwork to try to solve some of these air filtration
systems problems, but ionization looks promising and
there is some data to back it up. So, yeah.
Anything you guys need on that. So, have any schools
been outfitted with, you know-- we heard that some
schools had air filtration systems, portable ones, in
the classrooms. Has that been done?

JOHN SHEA: Yes, sir. That's what Mr.
Murray and referred to. We had 10,000 that have
already been delivered and deployed to schools that
we have another 20,000 that will be coming to support
classrooms and instructional spaces and other areas
where we think we need mitigating measures in addition to the other things that we are doing.

COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Were these done in older schools with poor ventilation? Were they given priority?

JOHN SHAE: It’s a prioritization, not just the age of the schools, but the type of ventilation system that it has. Whether it is working or not. There’s a number of prioritization criteria that we use. Age is one of them.

COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Okay. Thank you. Thank you, Chairs.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Next, we will hear from Council member Cohen followed by Council member Salamanca followed by Council member Cornegy. Council member Cohen?

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: Thank you, Chairs. Chancellor, it’s good to see you and your team. What I really want to know is—and I think what people want to know is are you going to be able to provide in person learning after Thanksgiving? And I know you don’t have a crystal ball, but, you know, there has to be modeling going on or you have to be doing
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something to be prepared. What is it showing and how can parents prepare for, as we move as a city, or indoors, as the weather gets colder? You know, the numbers--we had these yellow zones, but, I mean, they could either be just sort of the tip of the iceberg so to speak of the second wave here. Internally, what is the DOE looking at and how are we prepared for what you are looking at?

CHANCELLOR CARRANZA: So, Council member, we are absolutely looking at how do we continue to build up our in person learning and there’s a number of factors. So, not to get too far into the weeks, but, I think, first and foremost, concomitantly with the plan for ramping up the plan for in person learning, we also have to be very sober about a remote learning option, so we are building both of those systems and bettering both of those systems concomitantly. Now, we saw why that is important because, with the red zone, orange zone, yellow zone, and the ZIP Code, when the medical conditions were right, we have to be able to switch quickly to a remote option and have students not miss a beat in order to do that. We also know that, with our protocols around positive cases in the schools, if
there is a classroom or if the school has to shut down for 24 hours, that also makes it necessary to be able to pivot very quickly.

COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: Chancellor, I don’t want to interrupt, but because my time is short, but when you say, you know, switch quickly, like I’m not sure that that helps New Yorkers. People need to be able to plan. If you think that there is a high likelihood, for instance, after Thanksgiving, that you are not going to be able to in classroom learning, I think it would help people— and Chair Treyger talked about transparency. Like if we were honest about, we think that there is a low percentage of probability that we are going to be able to provide in classroom learning, that would allow people to prepare and it wouldn’t feel— it makes you look like you are being very reactive and you are behind the eight ball when, in truth, you know, you probably have modeling data right in front of you that says, you know, it does look good or it doesn’t look good. And I think if you could tell New Yorkers that, I think it would be very helpful for parents and students.
CHANCELLOR CARRANZA: So, I’m going as Dr. Barr but to also talk about this because we don’t have a crystal ball. I think you said it very clearly and right on point. I believe that, if New Yorkers continued to follow the advice, the medical advice and continued to do the right thing, we will continue to be at a space where we will be able to offer in person learning. I believe that. But I also believe that we will not, in any way, shape, or form, sacrifice health and safety of our students and I think we have demonstrated that to our fellow New Yorkers that, when the circumstances warrant, we switch. But I do believe that we will be able to have in person learning and I will just add this one another caveat is I meet regularly with the 72 largest school system leaders in America. There is no one, of the largest urban school systems in America, that has as rigorous or as a comprehensive plan, including the testing and tracing, that we have a New York City. And sometimes it’s a little hard for us to grapple with that because we are in New York, but as other people are contemplating in person learning, they are blowing up our phones, they are blowing up our email wanting everything that we are
due to the complexity and changing variables. But I do believe we will be able to have been person learning as long as New York is continuing to follow medical advice. Dr. Varma?

DR. JAY VARMA: Yes. Thank you, Chancellor, for the opportunity. Yeah. I mean, I guess I’ll just say a couple of general comments which is the first is, again, to reiterate we always have to remain humble. You know, New York is not separated. It is intensely connected both to the rest of the United States, as well as the rest of the world. Even if we do an A+ job on everything for the city of New York, we are always at risk because of our connections. So, everything I say is always based on what I think today, but also cognizant of being cautious about the future. I think the second point I would make is really just to emphasize, again, that we use multiple layers of interventions to keep our schools safe and, as the Chancellor has noted, there are—I can’t even find other places around the world that are doing as many interventions as we are doing. The only places that would be
vastly superior to us are those that have, basically,
eliminated coronavirus from their country. So, that
includes mainland China, New Zealand, Vietnam.
Places like that. In the absence of that--

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time is up.

DR. JAY VARMA: all the interventions
that we are making are really the most critical that
we possibly can and I have quite a lot of confidence
that, if we can maintain good adherence to those
measures-- and that is key. Good adherence to those
measures, that we could continue in person learning
throughout the year.

COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: Again, I appreciate
the time, but I’m not sure, obviously, the dilemma.
Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Council
member. Next, we will hear from Council member
Salamanca followed by Council member Cornegy, Council
member Miller, and Council member Borelli. Council
member Salamanca?

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time will begin now.

COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chair. Good afternoon, Mr.
Chancellor. I have some questions and concerns about
remote learning and accessibility to technology.

This week, I visited my alma mater, CS 150, my elementary school where my sister and I graduated. Just to visit to see how social distancing is going. The building was immaculately cleaned. I was extremely happy with the procedures. Where they had me take my temperature, fill out the forms, you know, procedures were followed. But what was disturbing to me, Chancellor, was that there are 360 students in that school that are doing remote learning and 120 of those students do not have technology at home. They don’t have an iPad. They don’t have a Chromebook. So, when I asked the principal, well, how are these students learning at home? She explained that parents have to come in and get a package for the week and, therefore, that means that parents are being asked to be educators at home and so I would like you to please explain to me why is it that the school which is in an underserved community, black and brown community, why wouldn’t the Department of Education focus more on ensuring that communities such as mine and my colleagues that are struggling, that the students that are doing remote learning should have technology?
CHANCELLOR CARRANZA: Yeah. So, Council member, I couldn’t agree with you more and we actually have prioritized—I’m a little surprised to hear that. We are making a note of that because, as we surveyed our schools and it is exactly that situation that we’ve asked schools to identify for us. Who are those students that need devices and, with the devices that we’ve had, we’ve been delivering devices to schools for exactly that particular reason. So, I know that my colleagues are making a note. We’re going to follow up with that school in particular. But from the beginning, we’ve prioritized the allocation of devices, internet connectivity to students who are living in poverty, students who are living in shelters, students in foster care, our students with disabilities, specifically, because we know they are the most vulnerable students in our system and we also know that they, historically, have been underserved so they probably are the ones that need that kind of technology, as well. So, again, that is exactly what we’ve been trying to do.

COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: So, Chancellor—because my time— I want to get to
more questions and, if possible. So, when I spoke to someone from your office from your team, the first question they asked were, well, did the parents fill out the form to request a computer? And, you know, some of the challenges that I have in my communities is that I have undocumented families or head of households who are undocumented. Their kids were born here in the states, so their citizens. The parents are scared to fill out these forms. What are we doing for undocumented parents who are scared to fill out these forms to request technology at home?

CHANCELLOR CARRANZA: Again, while it may seem like a bureaucratic move, that’s why we ask schools to identify students for us. Because, while parents—And I get it. Parents may be very, especially immigrant parents, very skittish about getting information to anything that is government related. They do trust their schools. They do trust their principles. They do trust their teachers. And we have found that that has been a strategy where we’ve been able to identify students who haven’t come forward before. So, that is something they need to do. They need to let their school know so that their school can let us know.
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COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: All right. And then, finally, I also have a good population of special needs students. Autism or other special needs. What is the Department of Education doing for these students that are doing remote learning and have special needs?

CHANCELLOR CARRANZA: Yes. I am going to ask my colleague, John Hannah Mark, to talk about that specifically because that is his work all day long. John Hammer.

JOHN HAMMER: Good afternoon and thank you for that question. Department of Education, first and foremost, has been working to support and prepare our DOE and contract service providers that are speech, OT, PT providers to provide high-quality tele-therapy services to students who are working fully remotely. In those services, initiated in the spring where we transitioned over 7000 DOE providers to the provision of teletherapy services--

COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: Are they doing home visits? Are they doing home visits?

JOHN HAMMER: We are not. We are not currently doing home visits. We are providing--

COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: Okay.
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JOHN HAMMER: therapy to student who are working remotely.

COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: So, you’re providing this therapy to the students. Now, who is there educating them? The parent?

JOHN HAMMER: They are receiving educational services through their schools, their special education teachers who are providing remote instruction.

COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: Okay. And how is this being monitored?

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time is up.

JOHN HAMMER: Monitored through the principals who are working with teachers to ensure that students are accessing instruction and are working alongside families to ensure that that instruction is meeting the needs of the child to the greatest extent possible. I’m sorry, Council member—

COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: Yeah. They muted me. I know my time is up. I look forward to having more in depth conversation with your team about the challenges that I’m having in my district with technology not being accessible to my
constituents and, just to wrap up, I strongly feel that the conversation that you should be having with the Mayor, I think every student in the city of New York in the public school system should have technology. Whether they are doing remote learning or whether they are not doing remote learning. Should a second wave hit, immediately we are going to shut down and we are going to continue to have these conversations about not having technology. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Council member Salamanca. And I will just say the next week, the education committee joint with the Committee on Mental Health will be doing another hearing on the impact of students with disabilities. So, for all Council members, I would encourage you to join us at the same time next week and we will be talking about the impact of students with disabilities. Next, we will hear from Council member Cornegy.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Your time will begin.

COUNCIL MEMBER CORNEGY: Good morning. Thank you, Chairs. Thank you, Chancellor Carranza. It’s always good to see you. I will not be talking about gifted and talented today, but my colleagues
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have painted a pretty good picture about the logistics and the problems, especially Council member Salamanca just now. What I would like to say is that, in my district, we’ve given his many students as we possibly can journals. We think that that is a positive role to play in their emotional health and well-being of our scholars. But am worried. So, while we talk about the logistics and the reading, writing, and arithmetic and access to technology, I’m not hearing much conversation about the social emotional portion of this or the arts or athletics. So, is the father of six, right? You know, it’s well documented. I know how important academics are, but I also know how important the socialization component to this is and we are asking students, scholars—some very young scholars—to participate in an environment absent of interaction and absent of any social emotional engagement and we are almost asking them to act like adults. And even us as adults are having difficulty with this remote, as professionals. I’m wondering what, in the long term, right? Because immediately we have to pivot it and focus on the logistics and making sure that they get the education necessary, but long term, the social emotional
portion of this, what are we doing or what’s available? How are we pivoting and shifting as the Department of Education to meet those social emotional, arts, and athletic needs? I’m a student who benefited from athletics, right? No just for my body, but for my mind. We know that the arts, combined with good, solid academics or athletics combine with good, solid academics make a well-rounded student and help us to compete globally. But I haven’t heard much about those things and I know it's difficult, Chancellor. You know, that’s not wasted on me. It’s typical to have games and/or concerts and recitals and all those kind of things. But the social emotional, not to have a conversation about it, gives me some pause.

CHANCELLOR CARRANZA: So, thank you. I will start, Council member Cornegy, and then I’m going to ask Deputy Chancellor LaShawn Robinson to give some detail, as well. So, I couldn’t agree with you more. You know, Council member Treyger spoke in his opening remarks today about what we found with students on remote learning in March at in April and the disproportionate impact that it had specifically in communities of color. I think that is probably
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one of the more articulate arguments for why we have to have in person learning because we know that the children have been disproportionately impacted continue to be disproportionately impacted. So, we agree with you 100 percent and I appreciate the opportunity to talk about how we are ramping up and moving through what we already had begun around social emotional learning, trauma informed curriculum, and strategies and practices. We have not separated the academic imperative for our students from the social emotional learning, trauma informed strategies for our students. They had no one in the same. So, in terms of the curriculum and the strategies of the resources that we are providing to our teachers in our schools, I couldn’t be prouder of the work that LaShawn and her team and our chief academic officer and her team have done to really embed them. And then, I would just share one more thing and then I will ask our Deputy Chancellor. Yesterday, had the opportunity to visit a school in Hinton Park in Queens that was doing outdoor learning and what they are doing is they’re doing exactly what you were talking about. The teacher was masterful at having students move, but also had them talk about
what they were doing and how they were feeling and how they were processing and why is it now that we are together? How is that different from what it was like when you couldn’t go out and isn’t this great? So, schools are doing some incredible things around this issue, as well. So, Deputy Chancellor Robinson, can you give a little more detail?

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR ROBINSON: Absolutely.

Thank you so much for that question. It’s very important that we continue to prioritize mental health every time we speak about health and safety. We are continuing to implement robust social emotional and mental health support network available pre-COVID. In fact, under this Chancellor, we formed the division for school climate and wellness to ensure that there would be an emphasis on supports for the whole child. And we’ve been able to build upon the work that we have started, such as Sanford harmony, social emotional learning—

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time is up.

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR ROBINSON: Bruller social emotional learner, health education in elementary schools and schools across the city, and then restorative practices and middle schools and high
schools. We have invested in these programs pre-COVID and we continue to do so during this time. We have expanded our [inaudible of 3:18:02] efforts significantly and, once we began to be impacted by COVID, we ensure that we had a comprehensive crisis recovery effort to add to the additional support and response to COVID. And not only in response to COVID, but, frankly, in response to the added racial trauma that our communities have been impacted by this school year. In the spring, we trained over 13,000 staff members on trauma 101 and another 2000 in addition social emotional learning sessions. Over the summer, we worked diligently during this budget crisis to secure additional private funding and, through that private funding, we were able to partner with the Child Mind Institute, the University of Chicago. We built out trauma informed curriculum and resources. To date, we have over 45,000 school-based staff members who have participated in extensive training in trauma informed care along with 1600 school leaders who have prioritized this work. We know that this work is not only critical for our young people, but it is also critical for the adults who we charge to care for our young people day-to-
day. So, we have extended these supports also for our adults, as well, emphasizing adult social emotional learning. We launched the bridge to school plan which has been the resource that we have utilized across the DOE. That includes a plethora of activities to be used in the classroom, critical resources for families and school communities, and also we spent time at the very beginning of this school really thinking about the bridge between what young people have been facing and impacted by, adults, too, and the academics. That is why it is called bridge to school. So, there is an intentional focus on mental health and wellness supports during this time. We also recognize that it is important for young people to be able to socialize with each other. I have a son in our public school system. We, as a family, elected for in person and we continue to think through ways to engage in athletics programming. I’m glad you raised that. At the beginning of the year, we were not provided approval from the state to begin athletics programming, but we continue to think through ways to connect our students with their coaches and look at other opportunities for that support to happen. We are
monitoring the situation closely and, as soon as we can engage in athletics programming, we look forward to doing so.

COUNCIL MEMBER CORNEGTY: So, thank you. I will save the rest of my PSAL questions and the interface between PSAL and DOE during this pandemic. I’m telling you will at a time. That is going to be the focus on my questionings next week and also the arts. But, I’m not hearing the coordination, maybe because I’m not deeply involved in it, the coordination between the PSAL, which is, for those listening, the public school athletic league, which I’m a proud alumni of and our academics. So, I am going to say that until next week. Thank you for your answers.

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR ROBINSON: Happy to discuss. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: And if I might before we turn it over, Malcolm, I appreciate the question from my colleague, Council member Cornegy, and that is one of the reason why, Council member Cornegy, you and I and other fought so hard in the budget to save the Single Shepherd program which would’ve meant losing over 100 guidance counselor,
social workers for kids in central Brooklyn and parts of the South Bronx. How vital those relationships are more than ever right now? That is why we fought like hell to restore fair student funding. To save those positions. We have a lot more work to do and we have to restore the cuts to community schools and learning to work which are vital relationships for these kids. Thank you for the question. Next, Malcolm, please. Thank you.

Next, from Council member Miller followed by Council members Borelli, Barron, Rose, and, finally, Powers. Council member Miller?

Sergeant-at-Arms: Your time will begin.

Council Member Miller: And good morning. Thank you, co-Chairs, Chancellor. It’s great to see you and your team there. I think this hearing is long overdue. We’re hearing just a plethora of idea and my concern is when we get to, you know, public testimony, whether the voice of these parents and these, in particular, communities of color, are they being heard. So, I really want to kind of touch on that. But also, some of the things that have already been said. I am looking for the continuity and the
coordination between agencies between all of the stakeholders involved. I know that these things don’t happen in a vacuum. That some of these things and policies are by virtue of collective bargaining and other things, but we are sitting here now with teachers shortages and here in the district we have classrooms being taught by Perry’s and noncertified folks. And certainly, these are communities that are already impacted. These are children that are behind in their learning. Asking them to transition, first, to remote and then, when they are in school, certainly parents out to work and are we giving them the resources that are necessary? What does that continuity look like in terms of doing that? The reduction of teachers in the school building has become problematic so that classes are being taught by noncertified folks. I am actually in receipt of a letter from a local PTA that has a high school that works in collaboration with SUNY in which the children get college credits. Because they don’t have that certified teacher instructing, they will not receive those credits. So, how do we mitigate these things? How do we ensure that we have the proper people providing instructions, whether it is
remote learning or in-house learning? How do we ensure that the parents have the tools and resources to be able to deal with common core and other things? Because parents being home really serves little purpose when they don’t have the capacity to assist their children, which is what we have seen under normal circumstances and what we see now only exasperates that. So, the how do we address the need for the additional teachers? What are we doing and are we using this as an opportunity to diversify the DOE in terms of educational instructors and furthering the cultural competency that we need to see? And then, finally, get, coordination between Reso A technology, computers, that I know that Council members such as myself have provided to local schools. The more than 2000 laptops that were just provided by the Black Latino Asian Caucus and so forth. How is that happening and how do we prevent-- make sure they’re going to those that are most needed, that folks-- how many laptops, tablets are provided to each family, each child? What does that look like? What is the oversight to make sure that we have enough resources and that those resources are going where they needed to be? And
then, finally, I want to speak to what Council member Lander was talking about. The CBO’s that run after school programs that have another letter. We have one in district that ran a program last year that had seven classrooms and paid 1500 dollars. They now have three classrooms that are asked to pay 500 dollars. I’m sorry, 5000 dollars. And they have a fourth of the capacity in terms of students. And so, the math doesn’t work out. How do we expect to provide services for our most vulnerable resources and our children if we are doing things like, you know, overcharging? How do we get to a place that we can have afterschool programs that we do value which I reject the notion that we cannot provide in-house learning for our students? How do we make sure that we provide the best in-house experience based on teachers, resources, afterschool, and so many other things that were mentioned? So, I am at 543. We’re done. So, I will hang up and listen answers for those questions and I look forward to working with each and every one of you to make sure that we make these things a reality and that we have--

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Your time is up.
CHANCELLOR CARRANZA: Council member, so thank you. We will take through the questions that you asked, starting with the last question. You asked about afterschool programs. Our chief financial officer, Lindsay Oates, has already committed to Council member Lander, but will add you to that, to have a briefing where we can sit and actually go through the justification, the reasoning, the rationale for the change in fees. And it is a good conversation have. But we also want to understand what impact is happening out there, as well. So, she will add you to that list so we can have that conversation. Also, earlier, the question around Reso A and funding for technology was brought up in our chief financial officer also verified that that funding has gone out to schools. So, schools have already started ordering devices and technology utilizing that funding. If you happen to know of any instance where that is not happening, we would really appreciate you getting that information to us so that we can follow up with the schools, as well. In terms of cultural competency and diversity of staff, that continues to be one of our goals in everything that we do and I’m going to talk a little bit about that
and the staffing issue in general. I think what’s important to keep in mind is that, as we’ve worked very closely with CSA and UFT around the continuity of learning. We have built into the schedule every morning, a 30 minute period where the in person teacher, the blended learning teacher, and the remote teacher have 30 minutes so that they can collaborate, they can coordinate, and they can plan together so that there’s a continuation of continuity of what students are learning. Now, sit that perfect in every single school? Absolutely not. Are we working to try to get it better and better and better? Absolutely. And, so we meet weekly and my colleagues meet daily with all of our labor unions working through these issues as they arise because, again, there’s always going to be issues that arise in this particular way of learning. Well, that being said, it’s very, apparent and obvious that, if you are going to limit the number of students in classes, that you are going to need more teachers. So, as that number has continued to shift, schools are in the process now of shifting what their teachers are doing in terms of serving students in person. So, for example, if the school was expecting a certain
number of students to come back within person learning and now, a couple of weeks and do the school year it is become apparent that, instead of nine students in the classroom, there is only for students in the classroom, that creates the opportunity, then, to consolidate some of those classrooms, still keeping the numbers medically advised, and the social distancing advised, but that it frees up a staff member, teacher to do their teaching in either another group of students or in another way of supporting the blended learning. That is happening as we speak. That also being said, we are working with CUNY and we have made and we have actually gotten people that have taken us up on this for their adjunct faculty members because, as you know, they have had some difficulty with their enrollment, as well. The Chancellor of CUNY and I have worked very closely, so we’ve gotten adjunct faculty member from CUNY-- and this is particularly powerful to the problem that you mentioned around specifically certified or experienced instructors because these are subject matter experts. These are the physicists. They are the mathematicians. These are the English professors. At our secondary school, we
are working to onboard them and come in and be able to take some of those positions without negatively affecting what they’re doing in the CUNY system. In addition, we’ve brought on, literally, thousands of new people in substitute positions into the system and I know that one of the concerns that I’ve heard from a number of elected officials is, well, but subs. How can subs do the work of a licensed teacher? We know that being a licensed teacher is very, very important. I’m not minimizing that at all. But what I will say is that, in March, when we transitioned to remote learning very, very abruptly, and we stood up our rec centers for the first—medical providers and our first responders, I can tell you that, overwhelmingly, the individuals that took those jobs were substitute teacher and when I visited those schools and I visited those classrooms, they were doing a phenomenal job of engaging our students, of having high quality instruction, of devouring every piece of curriculum and guidance that we gave them to provide that kind of a positive experience for our students. So, we are doing the same approach with how we are on boarding our subs in terms of giving them what they need to bring them up
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to speed. The last thing that I will say that’s really impacting what we are doing in terms of our certified teachers is that we’ve had tens of thousands of our certified teachers that have requested and been granted medical accommodations. So, they are providing the instruction in a remote learning situation. They are certified teachers. So, again, as those numbers continue to change and morph, we are continuing to work to build out the support systems for our teachers and ensure that the continuity of learning for our students is as strong as it can be and continues to get better as we go into the rest of the school year.

COUNCIL MEMBER MILLER: I can really appreciate that, Chancellor. And if you could just allow me a second to be brief, but I want to make sure that we are putting children first and that we are using this opportunity to diversify the workforce and the DOE a with these substitutes and others that are coming on that normally have not had the opportunity to integrate within the DOE system. But, finally, is there a way for us to see what buildings actually have the substitutes, the certified teachers, the ATRs, and peri’s and others who are
actually providing the learning and instruction within the classrooms and can we see, by districts and school buildings, who is providing those services?

CHANCELLOR CARRANZA: So, Council member, as I mentioned, as things are shifting around the instruction, what is a classroom that may have a substitute teacher today may be different tomorrow because now we consolidated them into another classroom and now you have a certified teacher. So, what we don’t want to do is confuse anyone about the shifting data. So, we will provide that. I’m publicly committing to that. We will provide that. I just need a little bit more time to let the system settle and I do want to also thank you and the NAACP for your work in securing devices for our students, as well. So, want to publicly thank you for that, as well.

COUNCIL MEMBER MILLER: Thank you, Chancellor. Thank you, Mr. Chair, as well.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Next, we will hear from Council member Borelli.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Your time will begin.
COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: Thank you. I would like to ask about the bus contract that was announced. The first question, are the buses all owned by Reliant that we are purchasing?

CHANCELLOR CARRANZA: Thank you, Council member. I am going as Kevin Moran who is the point person on that particular issue, if you could unmute him, please, so he can answer that question.

KEVIN MORAN: Yes. They recently announced tentative agreement with Reliant would be to purchase their assets or their intellectual property and simply have the [inaudible 03:36:36] and that could be anything from the payroll systems to onboarding staff and training. So, yeah. The idea is we will take their assets, whether they’re in [inaudible 03:36:46] or not, that’s what we’re looking to do. But details on a tentative agreement will be shared at a later date.

COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: Are the taxpayers responsible, though, for the company’s shortfall? Their pension fund over the past few years?

KEVIN MORAN: So, the not-for-profit has been established that we put forth. It will be
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coming up on an upcoming panel [inaudible 03:37:10] to talk about the not-for-profits. They were the participating employer into the pension program and we do not anticipate a pension withdrawal at this time. The not-for-profit is offering up employment opportunities to all current employees and that’s the intention.

COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: Right. But at the end of the day, the employer that’s, at the end of the day, there when someone goes to collect, they’ll be holding the bag, no?

KEVIN MORAN: The not-for-profit is the employer. You’re correct.

COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: And the taxpayers are not financially backing the nonprofit?

KEVIN MORAN: So, we’ll be bringing that contract for the not-for-profits to the panel for educational policy. Yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: Okay. And then, their intellectual property, beyond the stuff that is given to them by OPT and the data we collect with registration, I mean, what could their intellectual property be?
KEVIN MORAN: So, it could be as simple as shoveling their yard. It could be as simple as how to stack the buses and line them up in the morning, how to get them out in the morning. In a COVID environment, how do you get you [inaudible 03:38:10]. It could be anything that they [inaudible 03:38:12] specifically how to staff up, how to recruit staff, how to retain staff, how to incentivize staff, how to make sure you don’t get violations, you run on time, you know, courteous, responsible service. All of those things you would expect from a business, you know, each company has a way of doing things and we hold them accountable for that, but it’s what we want to do when the not-for-profit establishes that [inaudible 03:38:35] so there aren’t service issues.

COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: So, how much did the city value the company at? I mean, you know, is there a price settled on yet?

KEVIN MORAN: No. It’s a tentative agreement and we’re still negotiating and we’re moving forward.

COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: But is there a tentative price in the tentative agreement?
Kevin Moran: The details on pricing will absolutely come at a greater date. It’s premature to talk about cost right now.

Council Member Borelli: Okay. Let’s talk about valuation, then. So, the company was receiving a 42 million dollars subsidy. There are reports in the press that they have received additional subsidies on top of that. We know they have been underfunding their pension by about hundred to 150 million dollars over the past few years.

There buses aren’t entirely owned by the company. Many are least. Their intellectual property, you know, it sounds like it’s something, but the majority of their intellectual property is probably the routing in the data that OPT gives them and their most valuable contract, if not their only contract, was with the DOE and that expired in 2020. So, how are we evaluating the company—in other words, why are we even buying this company when it obvious better solution would have been to use our own capital program where we can issue debt at a much cheaper rate to buy buses and highroad drivers?

Kevin Moran: So, you said a lot. The contract expired in 2019 and, in terms of contact,
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the administration has long looked at making a long-term investment in our school busing industry. As we move through March and April with the school closure, we looked at that very carefully. Their contracts were not settled in the long term from the 2014 contractor, the 2013 contractors, as well as the legacy contractor. They go back to 1979. They had paper agreements already in place for long-term contracts, so our discussion started with the 2014. Reliant was in that contract [inaudible 03:40:29]. They were not given additional subsidies. I don’t know which one you are talking about, but, yes, [inaudible 03:40:34] had ended. They were not getting it in this term. They are operating on an emergency contract currently, but there were no additional subsidies given to that company. I have no indication that they were failing to make the pension contributions. I don’t know where that came from, but the idea is, that when we purchased the company, we are purchasing all their assets as if we are going to run it and, ultimately, the long term, make that investment, understand the busing industry in a different way, and make decisions accordingly. The not-for-profit will be charged with running that
and we are looking to learn more about the industry. This represents, essentially, 2000 employees, essentially, 1000 buses. It would give us roughly about 10 percent of the industry for the not-for-profit to manage and understand more of.

COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: Okay. So, I guess I’m running out of time, so I want to have some other questions on a different topic. Kevin, thank you. But the mayor and the governor indicated that schools aren’t necessarily the cause of a lot of community spread, so is that true? Is that what the DOE is thinking? Is there any evidence of school spread among schools that started opening? And, if not, then what is the target date to return to full-time in person for all school children?

CHANCELLOR CARRANZA: So, Dr. Varma, would you please take that question?

DR. JAY VARMA: Yeah. Absolutely. Thank you very much for the question. I would say that, yes, at this time, we have not seen any large outbreaks associated with our public school system, so I think it is fair to conclude— I’m sorry. That is one point. And then, the second point is, based on the data that we have both from testing that was
done before school started, you know, where we actively encourage teachers to get tested and we have results from, I think, 30,000 teachers that were tested, as well as from the testing that we have done in the past week, all of those point to the direction that the public school system is not contributing to community transmission in any meaningful way. But, first, as I mentioned before and would reiterate again, this is an ongoing, you know, epidemic and things could change. So, at this point, I don’t think we should commit ourselves to any date in which we would be able to, you know, bring all students back full-time. I think that would really have to be a phased approach. And, obviously, it depends-- you know, I think it goes without saying that it depends also on building trust. You know, we have to build the evidence base that shows that, in fact, everything that we are seeing is, in fact, true and can’t be maintained true. And then earn the trust of parents and every member of the community that, in fact, in school learning is safe. I would make just one last point. That the experience coming from other countries is, in fact, that you can have, you know, smaller distances, potentially, between people.
You can have more frequent and more intensive in
person learning, but, of course, every community is
different and I think our approach of being very
cautious at the beginning in terms of the number of
people in classrooms, the requirements on masks and
using physical distance was the right approach and it
is just going to be an ongoing process to see when we
can verify that that works and potentially relax some
restrictions to open up in person learning.

COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: Thank you. I
just want to ask the committee counsel to put me on
the list for second round of questions and I just
want to address something that a colleague had
mentioned about the South Shore Staten Island being a
hotspot. 10307 has only 13 cases of COVID, but it
does have a high positivity rate. I will point out
that that is far less, almost a third, the number
cases in many other areas around Manhattan and our
largest school in 10307 is IS 34 R. They have an 80
percent in person rate and their attendance-- I just
checked today-- is over 90 percent. So, I mean,
this is the neighborhood where parents trust the
faculty. Parents want to be in school, you know,
parents are putting their kids. They’re actually
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doing it. So, I really don’t want to hear any
discussion of shutting down schools in Tottenville
and 10307 because we hear we trust our faculty, we
trust our teacher and they’re doing a great job and
should be a model and not something at risk of
closing. So, thank you and please put me on the
list.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Next, we will hear
from Council member Barron.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Can you hear me?

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes. Go ahead,
Council member.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Thank you. First,
I want to thank the Chairs. Chairs Levine and Chair
treyger for having this hearing. I think it’s
extremely important. And I came on rather late
because I was holding a hearing of the Higher
Education Committee along with the Wellness Mental
Health Committee and we ended late. So, I don’t want
to repeat questions that I’m sure my colleagues have
already raised. What I will do is what I normally do
which is reviewed the testimonies so that I can see
what issues they raised and hopefully what kind of
responses we will get from the Department of
Education. I want to thank the Chancellor and his staff for being here today and I want to talk about, you know, the phrase what did you know and when did you know it. So, I want to challenge us. What did we know and when did we know it? So, we knew, as a nation, that medically, historically, we were due for a pandemic. The country did not take appropriate measures to be ready for this pandemic. We, as a city, knew that there was a gross disparity, easily identified by ZIP Codes and other criteria that shows there was a huge discrimination for communities of color when compared to other communities. For low income communities as compared to high income communities. So, we are in much of what we are facing now because we did not make appropriate preparations to deal with it. We have historically had teachers that were teaching large classrooms, not, in fact, doing the ratio that is recommended to have an effective educational process. And what I’m saying is that we now have the responsibility to correct all of those factors that are now causing our children to have this adopted, hybrid method of being instructed and it is time for us to make sure that, when we get to budget time, that we put in the money
so that we don’t have to go and beg for devices for
our children. We don’t have to go and try to
scramble devices. At that we understand that it is
our responsibility and bring pressure on the mayor
and the governor to have the funds that we need so
that every child, not just those children in the high
income ZIP Codes that already have the ability to
have the devices and don’t have to now scramble to
get it. And I was discouraged to hear that there
were principals who had significant numbers of
children who did not have devices. I hope that the
Chancellor is encouraging principals to pick up the
phone and let them know, when I visited the school
and I ask what is going on? If I get a complaint or
a notice that it is inadequate, I pick up the phone
and I call the Chancellor staff and say, listen, and
I get that. And so, I do hope that we encourage
principals to be able to be able to get what they
need as they move forward. It is time for us to
correct those injustices. I know that there is a
long laundry list of what needs to be done and, in
terms of remote learning, distance learning, and in
class learning, the Chancellor knows— and I said it
publicly in the past— I would’ve thought that
remote learning would be the most effective based on considerations of health, exposure for children, as well as students. However, we have parents who can’t function in that kind of setting because they have got to go to work. They’ve got to have an opportunity to have an income. We have other parents whose children have to have some kind of tangible, physical support in a classroom environment by their IEP or by their learning style. And so, we’ve got to have this model. If we can’t rush to get this model in for in class learning, that would be great, but I don’t know that we can say that we have a date to do that based on the fact that we have got to find out what the data shows us in terms of the occurrence of what might be a resurgence that is coming forward. But, Chancellor, we are in the midst of the storm now and there is much that has to be done and juggled probably every day. My question to you is, as we move forward and come to the recovery, what are we going to do to make sure that we have the ability to try to recoup what it is that students have lost? What are we going to do to make sure that the program that you came in on, your grand vision on how to make sure that we correct all of those injustices that
have historically been imposed on black and brown children that have not allowed them to have access to--

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time is up.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Thank you. That have not had access to the full opportunity of other children and other communities? Are we going to make sure that the vision picks up? We know that you got a lot of pushback and a lot of resistance and we want to encourage you to make sure that you move forward with that. What are we going to do? And, just quickly, just to extend my time a little bit. Council member Kallos talked about a plan that he is considering in terms of reducing discrimination and I presented to you recently that I would like to know how we can structure an opportunity for all of the children throughout New York City who didn’t get into Stuyvesant or Brooklyn Tech or Bronx high school of science, have an opportunity for them to audit without any kind of interaction with teachers, without any kind of responsibility for the teachers to do any kind of assessment or evaluation of their work, allow them to audit the instruction in the classrooms that’s going to be presented in those high
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performing specialized high schools. So, I have
other questions and perhaps I will get to them, but I
want to thank you for the work that you’ve done. I
want to say that none of us knew we would be here and
we look forward to making sure that the games that
you have made thus far are able to be supported as we
move forward and, again, remind my colleagues, when
it is budget time, all of these things that we want
to have done, it’s on us to make sure that they are
the budget. So, thank you. I look forward to your
answers.

CHANCELLOR CARRANZA: Thank you, Council
member Barron. So, we are not, in any way, shape, or
form losing sight of what we need to do and that is
educate every single child in the New York City
Department of Education. 82 percent of our children
are black, Latino, or Asian and a full 72 percent of
our students meet the poverty definition. So, it is
by no way, no means, no way of looking at our school
system could we ever say that this was an affluent
school system with affluent children that is a
suburban school system. That is the reality of who
we educate in our public schools in New York City.
Yet, by every objective measure, when you look at who
have been the communities, who have been the children that have been disproportionately underserved, don’t take my word. Look at the data. It’s unequivocal and it’s uncontestable that it has been those very children. Black, brown, Asian, poor that have been disproportionately underserved for decades in the New York City Department of Education and in New York City. So, I make no apologies for calling that out and fighting for those children and all children. And that being said, while we have had to deal with this pandemic, I would say we are dealing with three pandemics. We are dealing with a viral pandemic called COVID-19, which is the medical pandemic. But associated with COVID-19 is the economic pandemic that has laid waste to our budgets, our funding stream, our work opportunities, and it is highlighted and exacerbated the disproportionate impact of all of those communities that I just talked about. It is unequivocal and it is unquestionable the disproportionate impact that COVID-19 has had in those very communities that have historically been underserved and have historically been under resourced. It’s unequivocal. You can’t argue the fact. In the third pandemic is the racial injustice,
the social, racial injustice, the structural racism that exists in systems and structures not only across New York City, but in, unfortunately, across our nation and where there have been some folks who have taken issue that I have also spoken about that. I am proud to have spoken about that, as a man of color. As a person who has lived my life in this skin and has had experiences that others cannot tell me, you shouldn’t talk about. So, what I say, in order to address those three pandemics that we are concomitantly challenged with, we cannot go back after COVID-19, after we have a vaccine, after we have suppressed this virus. We cannot go back to the normal that was pre-COVID-19. So, what that means is many of the things that the Council has been asking us about and really advocating for. Wraparound services--

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: That’s right.

CHANCELLOR CARRANZA: [inaudible 03:54:55] service, social emotional learning, nurses in every building, social workers, culturally responsive and sustaining curricula so students see themselves in what they rear and they write and they learn about. The devices so that we, once and for
all, bridge the technological divide so that every child has a device, but more importantly, every child has a connectivity for that device.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Uh-hm.

CHANCELLOR CARRANZA: The ability to use the technology that we have and the wherewithal that we have developed to use technology to personalize instruction for students in a much more personalized way than we have ever been able to do. We can’t stop that post-COVID-19. We have to build upon that. The new ways of coming together and bringing people from all across the city and having these conversations, we have to continue to build upon that. The old idea of having a snow day where you shut down the city, there is no snow day. It is just a pivot to remote learning. And think about how we can continue to keep that learning alive for our students and for our educators. The ability to collaborate in a very different way. All of those things are what the new normal must be when we exit this pandemic. But I will continue to say in continue to thank the Council. We need your support to continue to advocate with the state and the federal government to make sure that they step up to the plate because this
doesn’t happen for free and this doesn’t happen with a viral, economic, and racial social justice pandemic. You don’t take them on by cutting. You take them on by taking it on and filling the gaps where you need to fill the gaps. I hope I answered your question, but that’s where our--

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Thank you. Thank you. And to your staff, be encouraged. I know it’s quite challenging, but continue to do the work on behalf of our students and staff. Thank you so much.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Council member Barron. Next, we will hear from Council member Rose.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Thank you, Chancellor. Can you hear me?

CHANCELLOR CARRANZA: Yes, ma’am.

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Thank you, Chancellor. My concern is about the learning bridges programs and the learning labs. I’m really concerned that the quality of pedagogy is going to be lost. I don’t want these programs to just be babysitting services, but I want them to be a continuum of instructional services and support. And, Chancellor,
you had stated earlier in your testimony that there were like 425 schools that did not have access to nurses. Can you tell me what the need for early childhood education and learning bridges nurses are and is testing being conducted at learning bridges programs and learning labs and-- I’m trying to get all my questions in. And with learning labs sites, they are paired with specific schools. How are these sites identified because there are some very high needs schools in my district and, as you know, these learning bridge programs are supposed to serve the essential workers and in my district, there are some very high needs schools, but there is a lack of learning bridges, learning labs slots. So, they are not accommodating the need of the essential workers in my concern about the learning labs is it’s not only educational, but geographic. I have a school that’s in my district, but the parents of the essential workers-- the children of the essential workers have been assigned to a location or a site in Council member Borelli’s district which is a 20 minute drive by car, but in our trip by bus. You know, how are these determinations made it and we need to look at making them, you know, more
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accessible to the families. And then, my last comment is just that I echo Council member Salamanca’s conversation about the abuse of access to equipment and services. And so, I just think in the access to digital equipment and instructional support and pedagogy. That is the paramount educational neglect and, you know, that is really a punishable offense and I think that it’s really a shame that the communities that have been, you know, impacted by the lack of access and a lack of, you know, educational structure, that, you know, they are, once again, the communities that are-- you know, have the highest negative impact. So, I think you. If you could just address those questions. I know it was a lot, but thank you.

CHANCELLOR CARRANZA: Thank you, Council member. So, again, I will reiterate I couldn’t agree with you more in terms of access to the equipment that students need to be able to participate in the educational process. Again, we are taking a period of approaches to identify where those gaps are. We have heard very, very powerful testimony from Council members about immigrant families and their reluctance to engage with any kind of survey order to fill out a
form. Or some don’t even have the ability to access online forms. But that is why we have asked schools to help us identify students that need those devices. So, I’m going to encourage you, as well. Any specifics that you have, please--

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: I do.

CHANCELLOR CARRANZA: and we will get right on that, as well. But we agree with you and I agree with you. For all the questions that you asked in terms of learning bridges and nurses for learning bridges and ECS’s--

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired.

CHANCELLOR CARRANZA: and how they’re selected, I’m going ask Deputy Commissioner Susan Haskell and Deputy Chancellor Josh Wallack to tag team in answering those questions because they really have been the architects and working hard on that initiative for the city.

SUSAN HASKELL: Thank you, Chancellor.

I’ll get started and I will invite my colleague to jump in with anything that I am missing. Chair Rose, it’s good to talk to you about this again. I appreciate the opportunity to connect with you about learning bridges last week. To start, we have tele-
nursing available for all learning bridges sites at this time available from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. we are looking to expand those hours. So, in the learning bridges program could utilize that to get some advisement. Maybe they have a symptomatic youth. Maybe they’re not quite sure whether they should send somebody home or is this something we report into DYCD to get it through the situation room. So that resource is available now. We have given information about testing to all our providers and their staff including letter that will help them get expedited test results if they are staff coming into a learning bridges program just to make sure that the staff are as healthy as possible when we get started. We spoke a little bit about school matches. I think I mention broadly-- I don’t have today’s update, but we have about 500 schools matched. I know there are about 26 learning bridges programs in Staten Island right now at this moment. When we spoke, you mentioned this case-- and I would like to follow up with your office. It didn’t sound right to me about that travel distance and I think there’s something not right about that, so I definitely want to follow up with that specific case and see if we can find a
solution to that one. How are schools being matched? I mean, I think it’s important to say that, as my colleague, Josh, said earlier, we’re focusing on students with the most need first. So, we’ve—and my colleague, Christ Caruso, is also here and had been helping up match to schools that have high need. We’re looking at demand. In other words, where those applications are coming from into the DOE portal. We’re taking into consideration geography, communities that have been hard hit by COVID and proximity to the learning lab itself, an issue you’ve just raised for one of your constituents. So, all of those things are being taken into consideration and I think, you know, on thing that’s critical—that’s been critical about this school match to this point is that this is a new way of doing service for young people and each school has its own schedule. So, in order to get the service to the students who need it most on the most number of days, we really wanted to have programs aligning with the Scheel schedule. In other words, if I’m matched with this group of schools, I connect with the principal. I offer my service to balance the days when you are doing school in person. And so, our providers now are working
through those schedules with students. And before I pass it off to my college, I’ll just say that DYCD is overseeing the contracts for k to eight and we’re not building up schools. Our programs are not schools, but they are staffed with caring adults and opportunities for young people to have positive peer connections, do recreational activities when they’re not engaged in their remote learning and we feel confident we can give young people support that goes beyond what they might be getting at home on those remote learning days and I-- somebody mention anecdotes. I’ve actually seen some photo and activities. Everything from yoga and origami and the cla-- you know, different student engaged in their classroom remote learning. So, from our perspective, that’s the social emotional supportive environment we’re trying to create for students in the k to eight. Josh?

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: And, Commissioner, I’m really concerned about-- I understand the social emotional part, but these young people are in these learning labs all day in place of being at home maybe with a parent that would be assisting them with the instructional-- you know, their studies and whatever
they’re learning remotely. I’m concerned that these young people at these learning labs are not going to have that level of support. They need the educational support, you know, during the day. So, and then the location of the—you know, the schools that have been identified, you know, like early on in this process are not necessarily the schools that have the highest need. I have schools that have one or two in reading and math and that is the—you know, the majority of the students in the school. And the absence of being in school, you know, and their parents being essential workers, I need for the learning labs to be more than just, you know, focused on the social emotional. But there needs to be someone that is focused on the educational.

SUSAN HASKELL: Agreed. And they are staffed with people who can help with everything from how do I work my technology today to how can I communicate with the school to learn more about how do support. And we would like to hear from you if you would like to talk about specific school recommendations.

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Okay. Thank you.
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COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Next, we will hear from Council member Powers.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: Thank you. Thanks everybody. Very long hearing, but very informative and educational. No pun intended. Before get my real question in my questions that I had sort of planned to ask, wanted to just follow up with Council member Borelli’s question related to the bus contract just because it is something that I think is relevant right now. And I wanted to ask— Anybody is free to respond, but just to give us a sense of— wanted to know whether that it gone through an RFP to select the food to purchase and, if not, can you give us information why that purchase wouldn’t have had to go through an RFP?

CHANCELLOR CARRANZA: Thank you, Council member. I’m going to ask for Kevin Moran to be unmuted, please.

KEVIN MORAN: Yes. So, for this purchase, right now what happens is we constitute a board for a not-for-profit similar to how we arranged the custodial through the [inaudible 04:09:26] system and that the in the not-for-profit actually manages the
work. There is no RFP for that. The matter is that Reliant currently is on emergency contract extension provided service. This is a tentative agreement. I mentioned that at the start when Council member Borelli talked about it. We announced the tentative agreement and I promise you more to come at a later date.

COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: And how do you know that you’re getting the best value for that contract if you are not going out into the field to be--

KEVIN MORAN: Yeah. Yeah. We engaged with the national expert, a consultant in this regard and they are working in partnership with us as a group [inaudible 04:10:06]. It’s public, obviously, now. And Transpar helps evaluate. They do this work nationally and they will help evaluate the deal and how it works.

COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: Okay. I think Council member Borelli is coming back for second round. I will let him go back to some of those questions, but I want to just go back to remote learning. So, number of students-- and this is probably going to be the Chancellor or someone else. I just want to-- you know, there’s new numbers, I
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believe, students that have chosen fully remote learning which has increased dramatically from what I have is 26 percent before schools reopened to 52 percent now, according to the latest survey results as of Friday, the ninth. So, week from today. Can you just tell us what you’re thinking is and why those numbers have increased and do you attribute those increases in students choosing in fully remote over in school blended learning, primarily to be concerned about student health and fear of contracting COVID or do you attribute it to other reasons?

CHANCELLOR CARRANZA: Yeah. This is strictly just opinion here. We don’t have any hard polling data or anything like that. What I can tell you is that there’s just been a lot of talk just in general, not only in media, and the news channels. There is just— you know, there is increase in case counts across the country. We’ve had our own zones in New York City where we have implemented some strategies and we have had to shut down some schools. I just think people are traumatized and people are nervous and parents are traumatized and parents are nervous. So, I think that once-- and I could tell
you that have been to schools in every borough and, without exception, once you are in a school and you see how clean the schools are, you see that there are structures and protocols and your temperatures check did you have to show your questionnaire in your answers and there is social distancing. The kids are wearing their masks. Once parents experience that in students experience that, the level of angst comes way down.

COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: But then, I guess, my question is why is those numbers going in the other direction if that’s the case? If you were doing blended learning and felt like it was safe, everything— all the protocols were in place that would keep you safe, wouldn’t you expect that number to go in the other direction?

CHANCELLOR CARRANZA: Sure. But as I said in my comments, Council member, we are in a media-rich environment where people are being bombarded with all of these messages about case counts going up all over the country and people are nervous about that. So I think that— you know, I don’t have a crystal ball, but if we continue to do what we have done to control the community spread and
this starts to be controlled across the country and people have-- I will tell you, for the weeks that we have had in person learning now, we’ve had remarkably, remarkably safe learning environments. Maybe Dr. Varma can talk a little bit more about that. So, when you look at the data, it doesn’t support the narrative that’s out there about the exploding cases, in particular, in our schools. But there is still this environment that people are subjected to and I don’t blame parents for being nervous.

COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: Gotcha’. I’m just going to go to the next question. You know, I think there’s more than that. You know, I understand that, maybe, there is a narrative problem here versus the reality of being in the schools.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired.

COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: It does seem like there’s more to it. I’m just going to ask another question with the approval of the Chairs. I’ve been here for four hours. But I just wanted to ask a couple data points because on the same thing about safety and feeling safe, perception versus reality, but also what are folks feeling like right now, can
you just tell us just some data numbers on the number of teachers that have retired or resigned or applied for medical accommodations and received medical accommodations for this school year?

CHANCELLOR CARRANZA: Yeah. So, all started then I will ask Lauren Siciliano, our chief administrative officer to give you the details because she will have them. So, we take the official snapshot of retirements and separations on October 31. So, we can’t give you for this year, but I can analogously tell you that, what we’re seeing in terms of the retirements and separation is not any more than what we have seen last year. In fact, it is lower than what we’ve seen last year. So, we expect that to hold true after we take our official snapshot on October 31. Lauren, if you are on muted, can you talk about accommodations? How many been granted? How many people apply? And was there another part of that--

COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: Applied and received.

CHANCELLOR CARRANZA: Applied and received. Lauren?
LAUREN SICILIANO: Yes. Absolutely. Happy to. So, to date, approximately 38,000 staff applied for reasonable accommodations to work remotely due to higher risk of COVID and, of those, 34,000 have been granted.

COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: Can you give me the first number again? It was--

LAUREN SICILIANO: 38,000.

COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: 38. Okay.

LAUREN SICILIANO: And 34,000 for the number granted.

COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: Okay. And I’m just going to ask one more question. Thank you, Lauren. This is back, I think, to the Chancellor. Do you expect to see that number-- I know I’m using your words-- crystal ball. But on the crystal ball, do you see or predict that the number in your next survey to be a higher proportion going back remote even if your thesis is true here which is that the narrative has sort of gotten out of control and it is hard to define? What is your expectation as you move forward in the school year about whether remote will become growing options for folks?
CHANCELLOR CARRANZA: I think that-- and we talk a lot about this. I think that as our community starts to see that this is a safe learning environment, as students start to communicate with their friends about what their experiences are in school, as the community spread and the peaks and valleys-- the peaks that we had to New York City are brought under control again, I think that we are going to see an increased desire for in person learning. That would be what my prediction is, if I had a crystal ball. That being said, we have no way of knowing.

COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: Right. When do you know? Like how often are you getting numbers or like getting a learning survey that says here is how-- with the numbers, the latest numbers, are? Like when will we know what the trend-- how often do you see the numbers that give you a sense of the trend?

CHANCELLOR CARRANZA: So, we follow those numbers every single day we definitely look at them weekly. There will be a window that we’ve talked about all along with this design in which parents that have chosen a full remote experience will have the opportunity to opt in, specifically opt back in,
to an in person learning. That is probably going to happen within the next four weeks where that window we will be talking about it. And we will be doing lots of outreach to parents and communities to make sure that they understand that this is your opportunity to opt into the in person learning because we have to plan for it, we have to program for it. I think that will give us a very true picture of how many parents and students have chosen in person versus remote.

COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: Okay. Thank you for the questions and answers and thank you, to both Chairs for putting up with a lot of our questions. So, thanks so much.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Council member Powers. For a very strict two minutes, we will go to Council member Levin and then Council member Borelli and then back to Chair Treyger.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

CHANCELLOR CARRANZA: Excuse, Mr. Chairman, I’ve been here for four and a half hours and I need to go to the restroom and I thought there wasn’t going to be a second round. I’ve been holding it. I just can’t hold it anymore.
CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Mr. Chancellor, I’d be happy to have a very quick break. Apparently there was a very pressing item that they felt was not answered in their first round of questions, but I would be happy to take a few minutes quick break just for--

CHANCELLOR CARRANZA: I understand, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate it. Those were the ground rules. I have a number situations that I am trying to work through right now. We are in the midst of trying to reopen schools and I have spent four and half hours, with all respect, answering questions here to the best of our ability. I have a school system to keep open. I have a [inaudible 04:18:47]. I asked that we stick to the ground rules and, in the immediate, I need to go to the restroom, so I’m going to do that, but I’m going to ask that we stick to the ground rules.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Mr. Chancellor, feel free to go to the restroom, but I don’t think the administration is in any position to lecture the Council about ground rules after a number of postponements and cancellations. But we will take a
five minute recess and we will restart with you ever will testify from the administration. Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Good afternoon, everyone that is still on. This is Malcolm, committee counsel to the Education Committee. Just bear with us one moment, please and we will beginning in the next few moments. So, just standby a moment, please.

Okay. Now that the break has concluded, is anyone from the Department of Education, Testing Trace Corps, DYCD, or DOHMH still on the zoom call? I see Dr. Varma has activated video. Anyone from the Department of Education? Dr. Daniel Stephen is on. John Shea. Susan Haskell. Is the Chancellor, the First Deputy Chancellor, or any of the other Deputy Chancellors still there? Okay. So, Chair Treyger, if you want, we can just quickly go back to those follow-ups and the representatives that are present hopefully will be able to answer it and then we can turn it back to you and then begin our public panel portion, if that works for you.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Malcolm, I just want to confirm with you before we turn it over to my
Committee on Education Jointly with Committee on Health colleagues. Is it in fact the case that no one from the DOE is now on this zoom?

Committee Counsel: It is looking like we do not have—Well, John Shea is on. Video activated. I’m sorry. Just looking through everyone. That is all I see at this time and he is joined by, again, Dr. Daniel, Dr. Varma, Dr. Long. That’s all I see right now. Oh. The Chancellor just activated his video.

Chairperson Treyger: Okay. If that’s the case, we can go right to the Council members.


Sergeant-at-Arms: Time starts now.

Council Member Levin: Okay. Thank you very much, Chair. Thank you, Chancellor. Okay. I’ll ask two quick questions. What is that, in the testing, the randomized testing that DOE did recently in the past week, it showed a positivity rate of one out of 1700, so, .06 percent. Obviously, our
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positivity rate as a city is 1.5 percent right now in a seven day moving average. That’s a huge discrepancy and I know that, you know, there’s— we’re not really sure what the data is showing in terms of children testing positive, but are we certain that that is how low that is? Because that seems awfully, awfully low.

CHANCELLOR CARRANZA: Thank you, Council member. So, Dr. Varma and Dr. Long?

DR. JAY VARMA: Sure. May go ahead and answer. So, just to clarify the numbers, the ones that we have as of this morning— and, again, the changing because people are getting tested today— were based for the monthly random sample survey that we started on Friday of last week and then continued through yesterday, there have been— there were 10,676 that were tested. As of this morning, 7257 had complete results back and, of those, 15 were positive which was 0.2 percent. So, 15÷7257 of the results that are available.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Okay.

DR. JAY VARMA: So, just to clarify the numbers. So, this is a little complicated. I’ll try to keep it brief, but we have to remember that, when
you look at test positivity, the indicator that we
follow normally, we, as epidemiologists to public
health professionals know that that is not a-- you
can’t directly apply that to the total population of
the community because, obviously, that includes
people who sought testing and, by definition, you’re
going to get into that group of people who are at
higher risk. So, as an indicator--

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired.

DR. JAY VARMA: We use that as an
indicator to mark trends over time, but we wouldn’t
consider that what we call the prevalence. Its
prevalence would be, you know, if you took 1000
people randomly off the street, what percentage of
them would be positive? We know that it is going to
be much lower than that. So, the question you’re
asking is how do you know whether the prevalence of
infection in the school community, which is what
we’re measuring-- what we call point prevalence---
how that compares to the community prevalence. And
the only way you can do that is through modeling
estimates and that is because this is a very
challenging disease in terms of who gets tested,
along people are infectious for, etc. So we up teams
at NYU and Columbia were continuously, at least every week, updating estimates where they produce an estimate of what they think the number of infections in the city are and, based on the estimates from this past week— and there’s a range there because there’s a lot of imperfections and assumptions that goes into it— we would expect that the point prevalence— so if you took a random sample of New York resolve the street, that it would be anywhere from, say, around 0.1 percent to 0.7 percent. So—

COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Right.

DR. JAY VARMA: less than one percent overall. So, the point estimate that we are getting from the school community is consistent with that and what it indicates to us is that school does not appear to be a risk factor to getting infected which is what we would’ve presumed, but it’s consistent with that.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: But it doesn’t— Not in a special risk factor, but it—

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Council member Levin, just we do have to move on, but if you want to get that point in for Dr. Varma, please.
COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Okay. I just wanted to say that it’s—it doesn’t seem to be in a special risk factor, but what we’re seeing in Europe right now, for example, is very concerning. Czech Republic is close down their schools and I don’t know what is going to be happening in France or in Portugal or in Italy, but we are seeing that they are taking other measures of, you know, other types of closures. Restaurants and things like that. And, you know, I remain concerned that, if we are going to be in the situation like what they are in Europe right now, we should be starting to think about how we are going to react to communitywide transmission the like of what they are having in Europe right now.

DR. JAY VARMA: Yeah. I’ll answer just very briefly and the answer is they are not doing anything like what we are doing. The model we have chosen is to model ourselves off the East Asian megacities. Singapore, Hong Kong, Korea and jump and react. Places in Europe, cities in Europe, Paris, Milan, you know, Madrid, London, they would love to have a three percent test positivity rate. We, in fact, look at it as a mark of danger and need to act. So, we have chosen a totally different approach. So,
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yes. Europe is a concerning case study for what not to do.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Okay. Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Council member Levin. We will now go to Council member Borelli.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Can we please unmute Council member Borelli?

COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: Thank you.

Sorry. I was trying to be cognizant of the Chancellor’s time. I’m reading the state’s public health law, section 2164 which sets up the ability for school districts to require medical procedures, usually vaccinations, for entry into public schools and in the following section, it sets up medical exemptions for them. But I’m not seeing where the city gets the authority to actually enforce the mandate of testing in schools. So, I’m just wondering where does the statutory authority come from to require COVID testing and, if the child doesn’t have consent and he or she is mandated to do remote, does remote education meet the state constitutional requirement of sound, basic education?
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CHANCELLOR CARRANZA: So, Council member,
I’m not an attorney and I don’t know if any of our attorneys are on here, but we are in a pandemic. The governor has issued executive emergency orders. The city health commissioner has issued orders, as well. So, we do have not only a duty, but we have an obligation to maintain a safe environment for students and staff in our buildings. So, we would be happy to get a detailed legal answer for you on that. On that specific question in terms of the law.

COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: Thank you.
And do you agree that a remote learning, normal circumstances, would not meet the constitutional requirement of a sound, basic education?

CHANCELLOR CARRANZA: I don’t agree. I think, because of the pandemic, we are all are really choosing from a portfolio of imperfect solutions and remote learning is one of those imperfect solutions. But in order to keep students and staff safe and understanding that we can’t have school in person learning the way it used to be pre-COVID-19 with the number students in the number of staff, that we have to make these medically advise decisions to keep
people safe. And we are working very hard and it is all of our--

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired.

COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: Okay. Thank you.

CHANCELLOR CARRANZA: to build on that remote learning experience so that students are getting access to the state standard curriculum. They are getting access to wraparound services and they are getting there legally mandated services, as well.

COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: Do we know of any children who were tested without consent yet?

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: All right, Council member. This is the last thing. We need to move on.

CHANCELLOR CARRANZA: Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: And then I was just instructed before I turned to Council member Holden, Council member Cornegy or Miller-- raise your hand now or forever hold your peace for two minutes second lightning round. Council member Holden. If we could please unmute Council member Holden.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.
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COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: And Chancellor, when will the grading policy be released?

CHANCELLOR CARRANZA: That’s imminent.

COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: All right. So, we should have it within the end of the month or--

CHANCELLOR CARRANZA: Absolutely before the end of the month.

COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Okay. And when are the students being tested for gifted and talented?

CHANCELLOR CARRANZA: Again, we are in the final stages of vetting that policy internally, as well, so that will come before the end of the month, as well.

COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: And just-- I might know the answer to this, but I would like to just share it. Why can’t there be a camera in the classroom?

CHANCELLOR CARRANZA: Could you elaborate more on that?

COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: For instance, to tape-- to videotape or live a teacher in the classroom.

CHANCELLOR CARRANZA: Well, we know pedagogically that that is not best practice. You
know, camera stationary classroom while the teacher walks back-and-forth in and out of view of the camera, just pedagogically isn’t a good, sound instructional practice. So, we do have teachers that are doing remote learning where they are on camera and projecting to a number of different students across the city. That is actually in agreement that we have with UFT on a program that we are doing, that the notion of a camera stationary in a classroom just isn’t the best practice, so we haven’t encouraged about it all.

COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Okay. And just one final question. Are all full-time teachers currently teaching full-time? If they are working, are some teachers not teaching the full workload?

CHANCELLOR CARRANZA: No. All full-time teachers are teaching, whether it is in person or supporting a blended learning environment for teaching fully remote.

COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: But they are teaching full time?

CHANCELLOR CARRANZA: Yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Okay. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: All right.
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COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Council member Treyger, our one final hand that was up, our good friend, Council member Miller.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: And this is the final hand. And I--

COUNCIL MEMBER MILLER: Council member Treyger, no problems. I will forgo my questions for now and allow you to continue the hearing. So, thank you so much, Malcolm, and Mr. Chair.

CHANCELLOR CARRANZA: Mr. Chairman, I would say to all of the Council members, if there were additional questions that we couldn’t fit in, we would be happy to respond to them if you send them to our legal—our legislative liaison. We would be happy to respond in writing to those questions.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Yes, Mr. Chancellor, because I wanted just to get one more point and, as well. I heard before someone mentioned from your team about the number 38,000 staff that have applied for medical accommodations. Is that just teachers? Is there a breakdown of teachers, counselors, social workers? Is that everyone?
CHANCELLOR CARRANZA: We can get you a breakdown, but that includes everyone and all of those categories that you just mentioned. We would be happy to get you a breakdown of the different categories.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Right. Because, Mr. Chancellor, the reason why I raise that is because, when you mentioned before that students want to go back to it in person experience, there are cases where the guidance counselors of opted for medical accommodations working remotely. Their cases were, as you have acknowledged, although we didn’t have the number of staff shortage, where kids are not getting in-person instruction. They are getting, basically, someone just supervising them as they’re getting study hall. That is a part of the issue here is that it’s a hybrid model that requires more staff at a time when many staff are applying for medical accommodations and, understandably so. A final point to Kevin Moran and then we will move on. Kevin or John Shea, many of the classrooms are reliant on Windows been opened for ventilation. What happens in the cold weather? What is the plan for the cold when
windows will be shut to deal with the cold climate?

Thank you.

KEVIN MORAN: Yeah. We do have a cold-weather plan. As you may know, we filed up our boilers yesterday and then, starting our heating season. We anticipate-- I know you know, as a classroom teacher, you probably kept your classroom windows open as I did at the to exhaust. That is a great form of promoting air ventilation when the boilers are up and if we could overcompensate, if you will, for the low temperatures outside. If there’s an issue where Windows cannot be opened, we will provide indoor air purifiers. We have an additional 20,000 on order. We are looking forward to the opportunity to kind of understand this in real time [inaudible 04:55:53] ambient air temperatures outside. So, we do have a plan. It really focuses on the MER-13 filters for the HVAC and the covers at least 700 of our buildings. So, have our buildings are supported in that way. And then, moving towards, if you can’t open just the top, just using an indoor air purifier for the classroom setting and we will provide that.
CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: But, Kevin, correct me if I’m wrong. There’s a difference between, let’s say, air purification and air ventilation. A number of classrooms are relying on windows open for ventilation. What happens when it is freezing cold and they have to close the windows and the school--

KEVIN MORAN: Yeah. Those rooms also have fresh air intakes and actual exhaust stores. So, if there rooms in particular that we hear of, we will get to it. We are down to less than 200 rooms without a functioning exhaust system that would take any kind of, you know, impurities out of the air and exhausted outside. Once the class is occupied we will also continue to monitor for CO2. But I can get you something in writing, if helpful, but what our plan is in more integrated detail.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Okay. All right. Thank you. And, with that, just this note for Mr. Chancellor and to others on the call. There is a lot of information that we did request that we need in terms of the number of staff shortages. And also, I’m not sure if we had a number with regards to attendance for the blended learning. Mr. Chancellor, a question I was asked in the letter that we sent
back in May, spring, and to summer, do we have with you the number kids that we have made no contact with whatsoever? Remote calls? Anything? Do you a number with you there?

CHANCELLOR CARRANZA: We will get that information along with the information you requested. We will get that.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chancellor. And, with that, we will move on to the next panel.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: That concludes testimony from the administration. We will now turn to begin public testimony. I would like to remind Council members who have questions for a particular panelist to use the raise hand zoom function in zoom. You will be called on when that panel has completed its testimony and you will be called on in the order in which you raise your hand. I do want to remind everyone that we are-- the Sergeant-at-arms will be keeping a timer for two minutes for people’s verbal testimony. Written testimony may be submitted for the record may be as long as you wish. So, for panel number one, we will be calling Michael Mulgrew, president of the UFT.
MICHAEL MULGREW: Good afternoon, everyone. I want to thank you all for having this hearing. Something that is very important and unprecedented, actually, across the country, which is a large school system that is open during a pandemic. We had to fight to close our schools in March and then, from April on, we started fighting or started actually putting together a plan in case we were able to open our schools. We knew everything was contingent upon the spread of the virus or, basically, what we now know as positivity rates. And if the city was able to get those down, that there would be a possibility that our school system would open. We knew it would be irresponsible to wait until we got to that point to then start to plan. We became quite frustrated in April, May, June when the city would not engage with us with a real plan because we knew this would be a difficult, if not one of the most immense challenges the school system ever faced. During July and August, the city did engage with us. The Department of Ed engaged with us and we started to break down all of the different facets that we felt needed to be addressed. The safety
procedures were first. What is the proper procedures inside of a building for getting students in and out? What PPE building us to have? What ventilation standards had to be sent and then had to check each and every classroom throughout the entire city. All of those things were done. And then it became about a safety plan which, I’m sure you all saw play out publicly where we were at odds with this administration. We had medical, independent medical experts, saying that we needed to have a medical monitoring program, mandated testing program. Thankfully, that kerfuffle landed us with having a very aggressive plan and one we are very proud of. So, now, it’s about monitoring all of these things as we open. We still face major challenges in terms of staffing. We face major challenges in terms of childcare issues. Not just our members, but many people across the city are dealing with. And we are dealing with challenges in certain elements--

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired.

MICHAEL MULGREW: certain elements of the Department of Education who seem to keep sending out guidance that contradicts our agreement or contradicts their own guidance. So, we knew forward
watching everything at all times. Safety is first, as we have always said and we look forward to answering any of the questions that the Council has. But thank you for your support in all of the different, what we would say, not conflicts, just differences of opinion about how things should be done in our school system.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: So, I want to just publicly acknowledge and recognize-- I think it’s no secret how the teachers union, the UFT, and all the support staff, this is very personal to me and I just want the public to know that’s watching, it is very courageous for a municipal union at this hour and in a financial crisis and pandemic and everything else going on, to be speaking up not just for their membership-- and this is really important for folks to understand. They’re not just speaking up for the UFT. If anything, if you look at all of the advocacy, it is always centering the needs of kids and their families and prioritizing their safety and wellness and, as a teacher, that’s what I was taught and I just want to just publicly acknowledge and thank every member of the UFT. Every member of our school staff that really-- our front-line workers
every single day, in every sense of the word.

President Mulgrew--

MICHAEL MULGREW: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: You mentioned that the city administration engaged with you in July August as far as planning for the school year. Is that correct?

MICHAEL MULGREW: Well, the Department of Ed itself at engaged with us in June, but it was clear that they weren’t given full throated authority at that moment. We really started to have full engagement right after the 4th of July holiday, which is why we had to fight to push back the opening of school not once, but twice because you normally start planning for the school year in April and that is without a virus and a pandemic on top of you. Planning for opening a school in the middle of a pandemic is-- takes a lot more detail on a lot more preparation and that’s why it was so frustrating that they waited until after the July 4th weekend where the administration at City Hall itself really started to engage.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: So, President Mulgrew, I think you for that honesty and
transparency because, as a former teacher, I know that my school community would be planning for the next school year which starts in September by usually February/March. They would already start making plans about hiring decisions and positions they have to fill and waiting for enrollment numbers to come in. the fact that they waited, really, until July/August speaks volumes about why we’re in the state that we’re in and why there were a number of delays. President Mulgrew, have you been given any information about how severe and what-- as numbers-- as far as staff shortages folks are experiencing in the school system? The Chancellor did not have that data here today with him. Have you heard anything on that?

MICHAEL MULGREW: We haven’t gotten a final number of how many that have been hired. Basically, you are talking about full-time substitutes. You understand that. You know, if we can find a math, science, or special education teacher or any sort of bilingual teacher, those would also be hired permanently. But, from what I understand. We have not been given a final number. We know we have a record number of complaints,
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operational complaints, which is a contractual provision we have. And the majority of them are based, specifically, off of staffing. The Department of Ed had issues. At one point, they had asked principles in an online forum to check if you were ready to open. And, of course, most principles which check I am ready to open because, the school had to open, they’re going to say they are ready. Then when we pushed back the opening of schools, there was a lot of misinformation going around because superintendents were telling principles, well, you checked you were ready to open, therefore, you don’t need staff. And that was not the question they asked. You know, you and I or anyone who’s ever worked in a school, we figure out what has to be done when the school opens, but there was a real amount of confusion going on on that side of the Department of Education. The side that deals with hiring and the side that deals with the day-to-day instructional running of the DOE. And that’s been probably what’s caused us the most challenges said, really, situations that should’ve been avoided.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you, President Mulgrew. The Chancellor and the city
administration finally shared some bits of data with us. I don’t know if you heard. They shared with us that under 20 percent -- somewhere between 15 to 20 percent of the surveys have been returned from those students who opted into blended, in person learning. Again, only 15 to 20 percent of hundreds of thousands of students for in person learning. Were you aware of that and does that concern you?

MICHAEL MULGREW: No. That can’t be true because the mayor himself reported earlier that 74 percent had opted in when he didn’t have opt in. He only had opt out forms. He then counted any parent who didn’t fill out a form as the 74 percent who were voting to keep-- to go to school in person. So, at that moment, the city already had 26 percent of the parents had already opted out, so that number can’t be true.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: So, I--

MICHAEL MULGREW: That’s the mayor’s press conference. Not me. And remember--

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Yeah.

MICHAEL MULGREW: the other piece here is that just because a student doesn’t fill out an opt out form, doesn’t mean they haven’t opted out. As we
now know that schools are open, that number is much higher.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: So, President Mulgrew, we are also kind of perplexed by what we are hearing today, but they shared with us on the record that they have received, and I quote, 72,000 consent forms to date, but we have close to 500,000 students who are still, as of this moment, still in the in person blended learning. That is under 20 percent of--

MICHAEL MULGREW: Listen. Go back to the mayor’s press conference in June. The parents are siding with me, I think were his exact words. 74 percent want to go back to school. So--

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Right. And--

MICHAEL MULGREW: That means, at that moment, they had 26 percent saying they weren’t going to go back.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: And, President Mulgrew, were you aware did you catch the exchange where there was confusion in the city’s own language. They announced today-- the Chancellor said today we have a mandatory testing program, but the notice they sent to families states clearly that, while testing
is not mandatory, you know, then they said that your child may be shifted to a remote, not definitely will. There is a lot of confusion on the ground about what the testing-- are you aware of this confusion?

MICHAEL MULGREW: Very much so because I know that it’s a mandated testing program. In fact, when we announce the program, the Mayor said it is a mandated testing program. That guidance they sent out-- and during my initial testimony, you heard me say that the biggest problem that we are facing right now was this constant contradicting guidance that the Department of Ed is sending out. And if you look at that notice that they sent out to the parents, it says-- the first line says, testing is not mandated. If you follow it all the way down about 12 paragraphs later, it kind of-- if you follow it, it says, oh, it is mandated. But our parents are not lawyers and they deserve to have very clear information sent to them. And it’s getting really tiresome to have these lawyers and bureaucrats at the Department of Ed making and sending out all of this contradictory information. It’s bad enough that they do it to the schools and the principles themselves. But what you
are doing it with parents, you are doing a major
disservice. They are supposed to come out with a
clarifying message that says it is mandated. It’s in
our state plan. In District 75 is not exempt, even
though the Department of Ed, we have seen slides from
deputy chancellors who have slide presentation saying
District 75 is exempt. It’s just not true. So, I
know you asked them-- I did not-- I was not on for
the entire exchange and I didn’t hear that piece,
but, yeah. It’s really quite aggravating because it
is hard enough what we’re doing right now. This is
an unprecedented challenge. You know, have you
checked on any of the other large school systems in
the United States and how they are doing with this?
You wouldn’t know because we’re the only ones who are
open. The last thing we need is the administration
that is supposed to be supporting as in helping make
it easier-- the last thing we need is for them
actually making it more confusing.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: I couldn’t agree
with you more. We are in a pandemic. We are seeing
cases increase across the city, not just in a few ZIP
Codes, but across the city. In the last thing we
need is confusion about what the testing plan
actually is for schools. I also wanted to make you aware, President Mulgrew, that they shared with us a number for the first time that, as of yesterday, they have received 77,000 requests for technology devices for children who still, to this day, do not have a device in Internet to conduct remote learning. And, again, regardless of what you opted for, remote learning is a part of the education program for the school year ahead and I asked why wasn’t this plan to head months ago? You mentioned that they engaged you only in July. This was planning that they should have done months ago. Were you aware of this moment and, if you could speak about the impact of the lost instruction and the ability not to connect with kids. They will never get this time back.

MICHAEL MULGREW: Yeah. Now, we knew there was a problem. We didn’t have a quantifiable number we had asked about at. And I want to be--you know, at the same time, I want to just constantly make sure that people know what is actually working and what is not working. Right? When it comes to PPE, when it comes to the ventilation stuff, when it comes to the cleaning stuff, that’s working. That side of the Department of Education has done an
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amazing job. I’ve never seen so many materials move so quickly. We had, basically, war rooms set up for schools that would constantly-- and anything we asked friend that side of the Department of Ed was working quite well. The ventilation piece, you heard them talking today. They are constantly on top of that. I want to publicly thank Rob Spier and Tishman Speier. They lent us some of their top ventilation engineers in the entire world and us. So now that we have a better understanding of how to make our building safe. And, hopefully, those are the people that, if we have 77,000 children without devices, we give that task to the people who have been doing this work because I do believe if we put it into the other side of the Department of Ed, the instructional HR side, that those children will be waiting even longer.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: also, President Mulgrew, I just want to put on your radar question that I asked them that they didn’t have an answer for, but I just want to make sure because I know you care deeply about this issue. Because our schools are experiencing severe staff shortages, I asked them about the percentage of students who are not
receiving all of their IEP mandates. This has a direct impact. We know about, you know, the issues of ICT classes and others. Have you received any information from staff or from folks that you speak with about how severe this issue is as far as not meeting IEP mandates and IEP obligations?

MICHAEL MULGREW: It’s tough to quantify because you go from district to district and they are interpreting the regulations differently and what can and can’t be done. So, I’ve instructed our staff to come up right now in, starting on Monday because we thought we had the majority of this stuff worked out in August and September. But, without any clear leadership in terms of how these things are supposed to actually get implemented and when we go back to—we can’t have the wild wild West show in the middle of a pandemic that everyone can do whatever they think is right because that is when people get hurt and children don’t get the services that they need. So, we know it’s a problem and I think we need to just give very clear directions at all times what a school should be doing. What is the proper ICT model? Does the child have to have access to both the special education and general education teacher
or a subject specific teacher? The answer is, yes because that is the federal definition of an ICT model. So, those types of things should not be open for interpretation. I mean, these things are pretty clear on how they are supposed to work. But, again, throughout the Department of Education, we have different interpretations. Some of them are blatantly breaking a child’s rights. And those things are being sent because we are getting complaints. I don’t have the exact number. But we are getting many complaints. I know we are getting more complaints that we would normally have at this time of the year and those things are then, if they are not getting rectified, they are going to go to the state.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: and, President Mulgrew, I don’t know if you caught the exchange with me and Kevin Moran were asked about those classrooms. And I worked in an old school building, as well.

MICHAEL MULGREW: Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: There are classrooms that boldly pass the ventilation test only because they have windows--

MICHAEL MULGREW: Correct.
CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: and that they could open. As we move into the colder weather where it’s too cold to keep the windows open, does it concern you what ventilation old buildings will have when they have to close the windows?

MICHAEL MULGREW: Yes. And though winter plan is something we’ve been working on. So, take an older school just generally. One that was having problems with ventilation. The process that we would go to that we have gone through is first we went and fixed all of the—what’s called the fresh air exchange dampers. You have to go up into the mechanical rooms on the top of school buildings. Many of them were not functioning. So, first it’s fixed all of them and what we do is get a balance of fresh air inside of the system and we are not recycling air. That makes the school safe at that moment. But then can you keep all that fresh air coming in constantly in the winter? No. Because, if you do that, then the building is going to freeze. So, you one of two choices. The two choices are either you replace the existing filter system with a MER-13 filter system and, in many cases, are dampers don’t actually have— you can’t just put MER-13
filters in them. You have to rip out the existing filter system, fabricate a new holding system, and then put MER-13 in that way or, what you would do is you put a heating element, a heating element on the fresh air as it’s coming in. The same is going to be at the classroom level. So, either you are going to have to turn the heat up in the building which means, in the rooms that don’t have a window, they are going to become hot, but the rooms that you have to keep the windows open, they will be okay. Or you do what Kevin just said and you start bringing in air filtration systems that catch COVID and you have an air filtration system working that way or you have to figure out a way to get an air exhaust exchange system. So, but were down to a smaller number of rooms and we are coming up with these winter plans now. I am much more confident on this side in terms of these issues because the people who have been solving them have actually done a really good job and we have verified that with independent experts.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: President Mulgrew.

And just the last thing I’ll say to point out to my colleague, to Chair Levine, we are greatly concerned about the increase in cases around the city and--
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MICHAEL MULGREW: Uh-hm.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: I think that, regardless of the model, remote learning is a part of the program and I think that the DOE and the city need to do a lot more to invest and make sure that every child from every ZIP Code gets the technology and Internet which they deserve—

MICHAEL MULGREW: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: and to provide the adequate chaining to your membership, to educators on how to do it. Because some of our schools, as you know, don’t even have adequate bandwidth where there are teachers who I speak with who, literally, have to walk around the hallway—

MICHAEL MULGREW: Uh-hm.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: to catch a signal in order to connect with their students.

MICHAEL MULGREW: Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: it is unacceptable. So, going to keep pushing the point of better support for the remote learning program because, as the Chancellor even acknowledged, if this gets worse as far as the virus cases, the system may need to pivot further.
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MICHAEL MULGREW: Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: But, remote learning is just not adequate right now as far as the infrastructure in place for kids. Thank you, President—

MICHAEL MULGREW: No. The—

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: I’m sorry. Go ahead. Yes.

MICHAEL MULGREW: No. The remote learning— Look. The educational platforms, each classroom having its own educational platform, we have, long way since last March, but the actual broadband capability is the thing that keeps me up at night more than anything else.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you, President Mulgrew. Then I will turn to my Chair Mark Levine.

MICHAEL MULGREW: Thanks, Chair.

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Thank you so much, Chair Trager and President Mulgrew. It’s great to see you. I’m just so grateful—

MICHAEL MULGREW: Nice to see you.

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: to your members and what they have done over the last eight months. One
of the most difficult periods in public education, probably in the history of the city and your members have been tireless and stoic and they put safety first for themselves and the children and families--

MICHAEL MULGREW: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: that they serve and for you in their efforts. I wanted to ask you about learning bridge because this is an important resource for any family that has an essential worker or, for another reason, each childcare and teachers are essential workers and many of your members are required to be at school buildings starting very early in the morning and so they need childcare which is consistent with that schedule and it’s not clear to me that learning bridge is meeting that scheduling need. What is your view of that?

MICHAEL MULGREW: It’s not. It’s very simple. It’s not meeting their needs because the learning bridges program open after schools open. So, how is the teacher supposed to drop their child off and be at school on time? And the Department of Education and City Hall knows that this is the real problem. There’s supposedly giving us an answer either today or Monday, but it’s been two weeks. But
who designed a program for essential workers that
access to the program starts after they already have
to be at work? Just think about the stupidity of
this. We designed a program for essential workers
that you can’t get your child in their until after
you are already at work and then the issue becomes
does the teacher drop their child off at all learning
bridge that is closest to the school where they work
or do they half to drop it off close to the school
where the child goes? And they will say, well, we’re
trying to do the safety, were trying to keep a pod,
but we know the integrity of that it is not real at
all anywhere. So, if the program is designed for
essential workers childcare needs, it needs to be
based off of what the essential worker needs, not
whoever got the contract to run the program needs.
So, I am very happy that you brought this up because
it is something that is getting me quite angry.

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: With good reason.
It’s really inexplicable. I have to imagine that
teachers may be one of the single largest elements of
the workforce that need childcare now. I would have
to imagine that you have thousands of teachers who
have young children in the program is not meeting its
stated mission if the hours are not consistent with the needs of essential workers.

MICHAEL MULGREW: No. And I understand people who travel from outside of the city. And those are more nuanced situations, but just the basic fact that so many teachers—and they said, look, were working on it. I’m done working on it. There should be no need to work on this. This program should meet the needs of the workers it is supposed to serve. Not meet the needs of the people who got contracts to run it. And if the city put out contracts and accepted them with those hours of work, then somebody should be held accountable for doing something really stupid.

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: And are they now claiming that the contracts lock the men and that they can’t fix this?

MICHAEL MULGREW: That is what— we are waiting for a final answer, but that was the information that first was given to us, my folks that were working on this.

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: That is unacceptable. We need to do better than that. We
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need a solution. This is really indefensible and we are going to fight with you to fix it.

MICHAEL MULGREW: I appreciate that.

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: I wanted to ask you about the policy of allowing people to stay home if they don’t feel well. This is actually one of the top guidelines of the Department of Health in general, together with wearing a mask and washing your hands. They say to stay home if you’re not feeling well. It’s very important. That, of course, has to apply to teachers.

MICHAEL MULGREW: Uh-hm.

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Do you have good protocols in place that allow a teacher, if they are not feeling well, the stay home without too many bureaucratic hoops? With allowances for adequate sick time? Really, it’s not only a matter of the health of the teacher, but really you want to protect the whole community by allowing people to stay home when needed.

MICHAEL MULGREW: So, what we have in place now is that if someone is not feeling well, they are being— you know, the guidance is do not come in. No one will be harmed for taking additional
sick time. If you have to stay home because of a
COVID issue, the specific COVID issue, then that is
not charged against your sick pay. But, if you are
just not feeling well— we did this last year in the
end of February, beginning of March where we wanted
to— when the Department of Health of New York City
put out the guidance that said stay home if you are
not feeling well. The MLC actually went to the city
and said, you can’t now punish people for following
your guidance. In the city agreed to that.

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Okay. Good. Keep
us posted because we don’t want anyone to be
penalized for doing the right thing.

MICHAEL MULGREW: I’m sure we will have a
situation where it happens.

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: And the last thing
I just wanted to bring up with you is the question
about individual neighborhoods which are seeing
spikes in cases. I know you have been dealing with
this for months, but, you know, unfortunately, we
don’t have good real-time data neighborhood by
neighborhood on things like positivity rates and it’s
difficult to analyze, but it’s pretty clear that
there are communities outside of the known hotspots
where cases are rising. For example, Tottenville on
Staten Island, there’s some communities in the Bronx
where probably the positivity rates are at or over
three percent. What is your understanding of the
protocols for determining if we need additional
neighborhood schools shut down because of localized
increase in cases?

MICHAEL MULGREW: Well, we were in our
agreement with the city. And, remember, we were the
only school district in the state that had a mandated
testing program. But we also included the ZIP Code
provision that, if a ZIP Code went above a three
percent positivity rate for a period of days, then
the schools inside of that ZIP Code had to
immediately be tested. I was not happening when
school began and we gave them, basically, five days
to start to figure this out and we were preparing to
go to court when the mayor announced that you was
putting those schools into remote setting at that
moment. Now, since then, you all know that the
governor is committed and now is, basically, put
together a mandated testing program for any schools
in red or orange zones throughout the state and that
is now in place. So, it’s monitoring of both the
city and the state data. It doesn’t match in terms of timelines. This is one of the frustrations we have. That city data and state that always doesn’t match, but it seems that it is showing the correct trends, so, you know, we have this in place and they are constantly looking at this. This is our biggest challenge. All the rest of the stuff, safety and everything else, we know that the country is now in another wave. Can New York City and New York State do enough to stop the way from hitting us? That’s really the question we have. And it’s going to require this diligence in terms of schools have to get use to you could be a person instruction. You might be remote for the next two or three weeks and then you will go back to in person instruction. It’s not an ideal situation, but that’s the world in which we live. If the city does get overwhelmed, then the school system is just going to go back to fully remote and it won’t open, probably, for the rest of the year. What we are trying to do, though, is, you know, when the medical experts we dealt with throughout the summer, they understood the importance of opening up a school system. They said it’s really important. But, at the same time, the
epidemiologists who we were working with said, we will back you up to open your schools, but from our and what we will have to do, we are petrified of your schools being open because the schools have shown in different places, right here in New York State, and in different countries and in different parts of this country, schools have at times been the bridge to a greater spread in the community. So, that diligence of watching and testing the schools is very important right now. But the city in the state are looking at this data constantly. You are going to see those red and orange zones move. You are just going to see it move. Hopefully, they shrink and that will be a clear sign that we are doing our work correctly. But it comes down to the community habits and you just have to do the right thing here. And, you know, right now our positivity rate in the schools is low. We’ve started our testing of all the schools, but it’s slow. I’m one of the reasons it is low is because all of the schools in the red and orange zones aren’t being tested because they’re not open. There only in remote.

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Right.
MICHAEL MULGREW: So, we are testing schools in yellow and a noncollege zones because those are the only schools that are in person right now. So, that’s another reason why our testing is low. But it’s a good thing. When we have low testing, low positivity, that’s a good thing. We should all smile.

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: That is true. But, look, and a city this big, the city wise numbers, while helpful, are not telling us the full story. We’ve just seen--

MICHAEL MULGREW: Correct.

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: huge variation from neighborhood of neighborhood. And we do need local data. We need it in real time and we’re not currently getting at, so we are pushing very hard for a ZIP Code by ZIP Code daily update on things like positivity rates because we have to manage the hotspots and see when they are getting better, yes, but also get early warnings when problems are emerging in other areas.

MICHAEL MULGREW: The best number to look at his hospitalizations right now until they straighten us out. And they are on the uptick.
CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Unfortunately, they are.

MICHAEL MULGREW: Yep.

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: They are, indeed.

Well, we will be watching. Thank you, President Mulgrew--

MICHAEL MULGREW: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: for speaking and for all your work. I think we will ask the committee counsel now to start the queue of our colleagues for questions.

MICHAEL MULGREW: He’s got to unmute himself.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yeah. The screen froze for a second there. We will call in Council member Kallos.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: 90 percent of life is showing up, so I just want to thank you, President Mulgrew, for showing up for our students, parents, and teachers in September when the Chancellor refused.

MICHAEL MULGREW: Thank you.
COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: Now, President Mulgrew, you in the CSA president [inaudible 05:30:59] actually pledged that you would not open a school unless it was safe and would go to court if you had to at that hearing. And that was the certainty that parents, students, and staff and I needed to hear to rest assured and, frankly, these assurances should have come from the mayor to begin with. I also want to thank you for your guidance as we reached out, as I reached out and asked them to set up remote learning centers and then, when they would only have 100,000, asking for more and then blasting them when they said they were only going to have 30,000. I am still disappointed that we are still at the 30,000 mark. As the contracts Chair to the extent that you brought up that these contracts are deeply flawed, I would be honored to work with you and the Education Chair to hold a hearing on these learning bridges contracts. And I will just ask, I guess, when-- I was hoping learning bridges would model more off the universal pre-k expansion that we were able to do--

MICHAEL MULGREW: Uh-hm.
COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: actually, know where the locations were, that there would be some sites that were community-based and others that are school-based, operated by DOE. At this point, I’m in a situation where I have been given one learning bridges location and 60 seats for 4000 students and, I think, nine schools. Is it something where DOE could-- and we found tons of empty commercial spaces for DOE, but they won’t even look at them. Is that something where the city should be or could be stepping in to operate any of these learning bridges?

MICHAEL MULGREW: When we made a big push in July saying we don’t know if all the schools are opening or not, at that point, we weren’t sure. We were working towards it. We did run a campaign with parents for a period of weeks where we said, no matter what happens, the city is going to have a child care crisis. Okay? The Department of Ed does not operate learning bridges. Okay?

COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: Yep.

MICHAEL MULGREW: It’s some coordination—Right. And I really wanted it steered clear from the Department of Ed because the Department of Ed has enough on its plate and they are having a hard enough
time even dealing with what is on their plate in
terms of the instructional side and communications.
But 30,000 is not enough.

COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: You took the words
right out of my mouth. So, to the extent that it is
in DYCD, I will reach out to Chair Rose on that and I
know she’s been a member of this hearing. I had an
additional question which was what has the
administration done about the virtual content
specialists to support remote learning?

MICHAEL MULGREW: We agreed upon a
posting. We agreed upon that position in August and
we still don’t have a single one.

COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: Not one?

MICHAEL MULGREW: and it’s actually one of
the key positions that we agreed to. They actually
came to us and outlined it and we saw that we were
thinking about the same type of thing. We said, yes.
This will absolutely alleviate a lot of the staffing-
it won’t solve the staffing issue, but it would be
helpful. We agreed to that posting and that position
in late August and we still don’t have one.
COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: What can we do to bring these people in? Is it for lack of knowledge that it exists?

MICHAEL MULGREW: It’s there now, well, we don’t know of what we agreed to is exactly what we want. Maybe we shouldn’t give them— they teach four periods a day and then, for one. Today they are doing this work, plus they receive a stipend. That is what was in the posting. Now there might be costs to the staffing problem. We can’t give them this period. We agreed to this a long time ago. What are you talking about? And I’m like, this one. Actually, will alleviate the need for multiple teachers. So, I don’t know. They can’t get out of their own way. They don’t know what they want or, in terms of the instructional side of the Department of Education, they can’t get out of their own way. They don’t have any clue what they want, what they agreed to, how to make it work, or how to implement it. That is why it is so important to understand the schools are making this work. It’s the schools making this work. Just like remote, it was the schools. The schools are making this work. The sad part is we have this major, one of the largest—
it’s probably one of the largest educational bureaucracies in the country and they don’t help at all they do is actually cause problems. So, they asked for a position. We agreed. We did a posting in August. We still don’t have a single one. And we know we have a staffing problem and this position was specifically to alleviate some of the staffing issues.

COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: So, have my word to get that posting out there and do follow up with DOE to find out what is going on.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired.

COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: but thank you, President Mulgrew.

MICHAEL MULGREW: Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Are there any other Council members that have questions, please use the raise hand function in zoom now.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: I just want to and by saying, Malcolm, thank you to the President Mulgrew. After this hearing, but I wanted to bring to your attention from some folks in my school community that they saw state troopers coming around our neighborhoods in southern Brooklyn to see if the
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city is, in fact, closing schools in the red and orange zones. Are you aware of that?

MICHAEL MULGREW: I am not aware of that specifically. That individual thing, but I am aware that the state is making sure that, not just New York City, but any municipality in the state is actually doing what it is supposed to be doing. It’s not just about the schools. It’s also about making sure that communities who are supposed to have a higher degree of lockdown are doing what they are supposed to be doing. And it is up to the individual municipal government to make sure that they are doing their job in enforcement. So, yes. I am aware that the state is looking at all of that, but, in terms of this, it just seems like they are just trying to make sure that everyone—calling everyone accountable. In this challenge of trying to keep us out of the second wave is huge. And this is—

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Right.

MICHAEL MULGREW: You could have a panel of the top epidemiologists in the United States or across the globe and all these different approaches in different parts of the world, if you can’t monitor where the virus is and shut it down quickly, you
cannot be successful. Take the politics and everything else out of all of this. You need to know if the virus-- the virus is here. It’s you. So, you have to constantly test randomly. What we’re doing in the schools. Just imagine that .19 or .2 that they called it, that we found in our random testing. Those were students and adults that had no clue whatsoever that they were COVID positive. They had no understanding that they were COVID positive. Thankfully, at this point, in terms of the random testing, we haven’t had the double case and a school. That means the PPE, the procedures and everything are working because it’s not spreading. But that is the diligence that it takes and that is the discipline that we are going to need to stay out of this. So, when people play politics with the virus and the procedures, it really gets me quite angry because I don’t want our school system shut down again. I don’t want our city shut down again. And I don’t want to be talking about more and more deaths ever again.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: No. I appreciate it, President Mulgrew and I just want to remind the public, as we let you go, that, as of June--
could be more, but as of June, close to 80 or so DOE employees that we knew of passed away because of the virus and that doesn’t include other school-based staff that work for different--

MICHAEL MULGREW: Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: you know, agencies. Students who lost loved ones. The number could have increased. So, you know, that is an important part here. That this is at a time when the mayor said to score people back in March, go back to school, when many people got sick and some died. And trust remains broken in the city of New York and beyond. And I just wanted to publicly again, thank you for being very courageous to testify, to continue to be very vocal on these issues for not just schools and school staff, but really for all of our neighborhoods. I appreciate, President Mulgrew.

MICHAEL MULGREW: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: and thank you for your time today.

MICHAEL MULGREW: Thank you. Be well, everyone, and be safe.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. The next panel we will call up is Tajh Sutton, Randy
Levine, Andrea Ortiz, Hallie Yee, Lisa Caswell, and Leonie Haimson. And I will remind everyone that we are putting everyone on a two-minute clock. We will start with Tajh Sutton.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

TAJH SUTTON: Thank you so much. Man, okay. Some things I wanted to address, particularly in President Mulgrew’s statement is that I think we have a misconception of what we have planned and what we would hope for these plans and what is actually happening on the ground. I hear a lot of congratulations on our ventilation, but we know for a fact that the capital plan that was necessary to update our schools and were able to make them safe for students, not just in particular ZIP Codes or at schools with really, really vocal and active PTAs because the parents there have the wealth and the time and the support to advocate for these things, right? But I’m talking about every school in New York City having what it needs with regards to ventilation, staffing, and funding. We know that that is not the case. But to hear our leaders continue to act as if we are in a position where schools can and should be open 100 percent is
outrageous in the month of October. I want to highlight that. I want to highlight the fact that parents, students, and teachers have been organizing all summer around the issues that we continue to see because leadership is not listening and, while I share your frustration with our chancellor, we also need to be very clear that the ball was dropped by our mayor, our governor, and UFT President Michael Mulgrew, as well. Parents are asking for very small, very simple things like language access and technology access, like universal broadband, like actually making our curriculum culturally responsive rather than using the words and then allowing our children to show up remotely and be police for not having their cameras on or being in their pajamas because they are tired even though they still showed up. And so, these are the kinds of conversations we can’t even have because we are so worried about things like whether or not we have enough custodians to clean our schools and whether or not our staff is supported in the ways that they need. Right? We are the PD for our teachers. Who is supporting the teachers and parents emotionally? Are we even having that conversation? What is the difference between
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discussing SEL and actually providing it and I can tell you right now, at the local level, many schools, despite their best efforts, are failing. It’s not for lack of trying--

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: If you want to wrap up your final point, please.

TAJH SUTTON: Thank you, Councilman Treyger. I appreciate it. I really just wanted to highlight the fact that so many families are talking- - the conversation you guys are having here, we’ve been having, too. And it is really-- and to all of that, we are at the center with you. We cannot create anything as a city if we continue to have leadership at the top and in this very unique space and everyone else, including and especially our most impacted families, somewhere on the sidelines waiting for guidance. We don’t want to wait for guidance. We want to help develop the guidance because that is the way that we know that our families who don’t speak English, who don’t have Internet access, who live in homeless shelters, or are, literally, on the street and trying to log into the school at a Burger King parking lot, right? What are the ways that we
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reach them effectively? And we are not-- we understand the circumstances because we are also living them and I think sometimes that gets forgotten. Parent leaders are still just regular parents, too. A lot of our teachers are also parents and that is getting lost in this narrative where the students and the parents and the teachers are being pitted against one another. But really what we want is to be included in the integral decision-making that is going to move our city forward and I will continue to stress for Councilman Treyger, for the Public Advocate, and what parent leaders on community education councils have been saying all summer and what we have been asking for is a delayed and faced reopening. We fought really hard and we got two small delays and that is wonderful, but the reason we are seeing families opt back out of the blended model and into the remote model is because of all the failures that we already outlined. [Inaudible 05:43:29] what happened and ask for your support in addressing. So, I think it is prudent upon all of us not to just have a monthly call where we listen the parents, you know-- air quotes on listen. Right? We let parents talk. Let me say that correctly. But
don’t actually listen. We know exactly what we need and what our families need and we really need to be engaged in a way that our expertise is valued and then implemented so that we can all create safe conditions for our schools. In the last thing I want to say is that not wanting the schools open because they’re not safe is very different than not wanting schools open at all. We would love nothing more than to send our children back to school, but we need to have an honest conversation about these spikes, about the infection rates rising in our communities that were hit the hardest in the first place, and what exactly we are going to do to keep families, students, teachers safe. Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Next, we will hear from Randy Levine.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Can we please unmute Randy? There we go.

RANDY LEVINE: Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you. My name is Randy Levine and I am the policy director of Advocates for Children of New York. I want to start by recognizing the very hard work of the DOE, educators, and the
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Council during this difficult time. We appreciate that the Council is hearing two bills today that would require the DOE to publicly report on remote learning, such as the percentage of students, including students with disabilities and English language learners who are and are not participating. Like the pandemic itself, remote learning has had a disproportionate impact on historically marginalized communities and has magnified pre-existing inequities. In the past few weeks alone, with the school year already underway, Advocates for Children has heard from dozens of families whose children are missing out on instruction because they do not have the technology needed. We have heard from families who requested an iPad months ago, but have not received one. Families who cannot get their iPads to work and have been unable to get help from the DOE, and shelters who do not have Wi-Fi or sufficient cellular reception to use the iPads. We were patient as the DOE worked to distribute iPads when schools closed in March, we were dismayed that so many students continue to go without the technology they need in October at a time when nearly all students are expected to learn remotely from two to five days
per week. A student’s education should not be conditioned on their parent’s ability to pay for a laptop and internet service. Talks about some of the other barriers we are seeing to remote learning, including the need for assistance for parents who speak a language other than English. We agreed that the city should publicly report data to help shed light on remote learning participation and are providing suggestions for strengthening the bills, including adding participation rates for students who are homeless or students who are in foster care. The city must also use the data it already has to redouble its outreach efforts and provide individualized support for families to get students engaged in remote learning.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired.

RANDY LEVINE: As the city continues working on the health and safety measures needed to protect school communities from COVID-19, school environments. Since the time schools closed, students and adults have experienced trauma and students must receive the mental health support they need to succeed this school year, instead of facing school discipline and policing which can result in
lost days of instruction and significant trauma, particularly for black and brown students and students with disabilities. Our written testimony outlines a number of recommendations of steps that the DOE should take to increase mental health support and social emotional learning during this time.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Next, we will hear from Andrea Ortiz.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

ANDREA ORTIZ: Good afternoon and thank you. I am Andrea Ortiz, manager of education policy at the New York Immigration Coalition. We commend the Committee on Education and Public Advocate Williams for introducing Bill 2058 and 2104 and are here to offer a very strong support for these essential initiatives and testify on behalf of our education collaborative about the dire need for publicly available subgroup data on student engagement and achievement for English language learners and students with families with limited English proficiency. Only with real transparency of the DOE’s engagement and achievement data, throughout the root pandemic would we be able to target
reparations for the damages done to our immigrant communities. Therefore, we recommend that the city Council publicly released disaggregated data on grades and engagement for spring and summer and have periodic assessments of fall engagement and achievement data on a quarterly basis. Work with the DOE to devise academic interventions for immigrant students and [inaudible 05:48:24] with gaps in learning due to structural issues and track how they targeted those interventions. Implement the education collaborative school communication plan and add significant capacity and investment in translation and interpretation services. Education policy in New York City has historically marginalized immigrant families. We should be disturbed by the fact that, even before the pandemic, one in four ELS students dropped out. The worst dropout rate of any subgroup in the city. The COVID crisis has underscored and compounded the profound inequities already affecting immigrant families. So, quickly want to highlight ongoing issues that we have seen on the ground which we would get into greater detail in our written testimony. Immigrant students are not receiving critical information or being meaningfully
engaged. The COVID crisis has exacerbated long existing inequities and communication with immigrant families, including the overreliance on digital platforms which our communities struggle to access. The abrupt shift of remote learning has hit our it would great students the hardest. They have experienced greater academic slide. They have not received the supports that they need and many are still without devices. The gap is only getting larger--

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired.

ANDREA ORTIZ: addressed. Immigrant families with limited English proficiency and low digital literacy have gone-- have been struggling to support their children with their schoolwork and the lack of robust instruction for ELS has limited student’s abilities to practice their English language speaking and reading skills. And the last thing I will say before I give up, here are members have reported to us that many immigrants never received information in their home languages about summer school languages, the schedule for the fall, remote orientation days, and/or other school bus schedules for their fall semester. These are
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egregious issues that I wanted to lift up. Again,
there is further information in our written
testimony. Thank you very much for the opportunity
to testify.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Next we
will hear from Haley Yee.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

HALLIE YEE: Hi. Thank you. My name is
Hallie Yee and I am the policy coordinator at the
Coalition for Asian American Children and Families.
So, for our schools to be safe and prepared to
actually continue reopening to our students,
teachers, administrators, and support staff, we have
to think about more than just that three percent
citywide average transmission rate threshold that the
city is focused on at the moment. On behalf of our
70+ organizational members and partners surveying the
diverse Asian-Pacific American communities across New
York City, we are asking Council today to hold our
public education system accountable to the
community’s needs. First, demanding that the city
provide accurate data, collection, and disaggregation
of data on infection rates, hospitalizations, and
deaths in the APA community and in all communities of
color. In order to best respond to the pandemic and reopen safely, we have to be able to track race, ethnicity, and languages spoken for those who are tested so we can appropriately take care and trace. We are not doing that now and the stories are being raised by the lack of data on race and ethnicity. We have been told that neighborhood level data is being taken in the form of ZIP Codes, but that only gives us the where, not the how or the who to help.

Second, we demand that schools in partnership with the city’s health system can ensure that critical information gets to the students and families in the language that they need. It was only recently that the Health and Hospitals was able to translate health outreach documents into the top 11 language is required by law. This was too late and still not enough. There has to be more support ready for the students and families who are limited English proficient. DOE has more experience with that already it needs to have more coordination with DOHMH and H&H in that regard. In the absence of clear information, misinformation and rumors prevail.

Third, we demand that schools address the mental health needs of students and families, especially
those who have been targeted during this pandemic and have faced things like loss, isolation, discrimination, xenophobia, and so much more as they returned to school.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: You may wrap up your final point, please.

HALLIE YEE: Sorry. Thank you. Our community members are understandably frightened of sending their children back to school and there is already such a deep mistrust kind of building within our communities around the government and ensuring best practices around testing and data and languages are just key to New York City’s recovery. It is critical in making it safe for our children to actually go back and learn in person.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. And, next, we will hear from Lisa Caswell.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

LISA CASWELL: Chair Treyger and Chair Levine, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Lisa Caswell and I am the senior policy analyst Daycare Council of New York. We would like to take this opportunity to thank the city
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Council for its strong voice in last year’s battle for salary parity. It has been a silver lining throughout the pandemic, giving daycare Council members much needed strength as they support thousands of children and families in crisis. We would also like to acknowledge the quality of administrative oversight being provided by the Department of Education’s division of Early Education. Their guidance reflects high levels of interdepartmental collaboration, making it possible for our members to access resources and maintain critical safety standards in a constantly shifting environment. In recent weeks, and immediate response to a child’s positive COVID-19 test results and one of our agencies centers. With safety measures and protocols firmly in place, our members have increased confidence in their ability to manage risk. This does not mean that they are not facing hiring challenges as they manage employee requests for medical accommodation. We are also dealing with the backlog in comprehensive background check clearances which may take months to resolve at a time when we need to increase the number of staff to lower class size. With regards to utilization, some of our
members are losing children as parents return to full
time work outside the home because their childcare
program does not have the necessary space or staff to
offer five full days of supervised learning to all of
the families that need it. Other childcare programs
that have agreed to run full day onsite learning
bridges programs are having trouble referring their
own children to these seats because they are being
reserved for children attending UPK and 3PK and
public schools and, based on earlier conversations, I
know this whole initiative is very confusing. These
issues, combined with continuing delays and the
processing of applications is affecting enrollment.
Fortunately, the DOE has assured its contracted
childcare--

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired.

LISA CASWELL: that their funding will
remain stable throughout the city’s recovery process
despite fluctuations in enrollment. Finally, as
members of the Steering Committee for the Campaign
for Children, we have been advocating for a more
substantial roll on behalf of childcare and youth
services. Our expertise in human services and
education should put us at the center of decision
making. Instead, we are often brought together for
our initial input but are not consulted again until
new initiatives are announced. We must be fully
engaged in the entire process, including program
development process, and implementation. This will
be particularly important as we continue to manage
limited funding going forward. Thank you so much for
your time. We greatly appreciate your longstanding
support of the city’s early childhood education
system and welcome all opportunities for continuing
collaboration. Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. And,
next, we’ll hear from Leonie Haimson.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

LEONIE HAIMSON: Thank you so much for
holding these important hearings today. My name is
Leonie Haimson. I am the executive director of
Class-size Matters. We are living in unprecedented
times and the public needs as much transparency as
possible regarding the DOE’s implementation of
blended and remote learning. To assess what is
working this year and what is not. If students are
not logging into their online classes, as 23 percent
of summer school students never did, that is strong
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evidence their plan needs revision. I am here to support the two reporting bills under consideration and to suggest a few technical improvements to ensure that the required reporting is even more specific.

Regarding Intro 2058, attendance data should be disaggregated in three categories in the way schooling is now organized for most students. That is full time remote, online classes for blended learning students, and in person classes when students are being taught in school buildings. In addition, the wording of this bill does not clearly specify how attendance should be reported or defined and we know that schools are doing that in very different ways. It should require also how many students attended the class each day on average over the last week, rather than logged in on any one day of the week. The importance of disaggregated data by the type of because, otherwise, we don’t know which particular modalities are working and not. Many parents and teachers have expressed concern that remote class sizes have been as large as 70 or 100 students are more which has made it impossible to engage their children. With the recent articles in The Post, Wall Street Journal, and Gothamist about
this issue, classes this large make it impossible for most students to establish and maintain any real relationship with their teachers and receive the feedback they need. There is convincing evidence that, in fact, online class sizes must be as small as possible to ensure sufficient interaction, discussion, and engagement and I gave some quotes from researchers and practitioners about that issue.

It’s also important--

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired.

LEONIE HAIMSON: Yes. So, the city Council has little direct authority over education policy making. Due to the language of mayoral control, they have an important roll to require maximum transparency about the conditions in which New York City students are forced to learn, especially during this highly unusual year. Thus, every effort should be made to ensure that the reporting bills you pass are clear and specific in their language to maximize the chance that they can be enforced and allow for greater public understanding. Thank you for allowing me to speak today.
CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you very much, Leonie, and to everyone on the panel who testified and for your extraordinary work. I just—one quick question from the New York Immigration Coalition or others who might want to feel free to chime in. As I mentioned in my exchange with the Chancellor— and I think also, Council member Salamanca mentioned this, as well. I have heard feedback from some of our immigrant families that they are understandably fearful for filling out the request forms to get a device. And the Chancellor mentioned that they should contact their school. What the administration needs to remember is that the structure that they created required parents, required families to fill out a form, a survey form and that might change moving forward when they order the more iPads next month, but their structure was the barrier for many kids getting that. Have you also heard the same concerns—

ANDREA ORTIZ: Yes. I--

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Please. Yes, Ms. Ortiz. Please go ahead.

ANDREA ORTIZ: Yes. Absolutely. We’ve been hearing that. And ask you may know, the issues
with public charge have made this particular issue one that, you know, we have had to fight very hard to get families to understand what’s going on and, you’re right, that the actual system was created by the legal team in the DOE who, basically, circumvented the capacity for advocates. [inaudible 06:00:15] their schools to actually fill it out for those people, technically, right? Although we do know that some of that is also-- that is definitely happening because that’s the only way that we can actually get those families to fill out the form. And, if I can just say that it also-- Carranza’s answer also completely doesn’t recognize the fact that schools do still have a long way to go to be a trusted place for immigrant families and that work is going to be continuing and especially important now that, you know, many of our immigrants have really struggled to communicate with the schools. Getting contact with anyone at the schools whatsoever even with advocates. Right? And so, we fight with the advocates to make sure that our advocates and our CBO’s are able to best serve the immigrant students, but we know that many of our immigrant students are not connected to a CBO or another advocate and they
are probably struggling the most right now as they
don’t have anyone to navigate these, basically,
waters that are not able to be navigated very well.
But Randy might also be seen in her clients, so maybe
she wants to jump in on this, as well.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Can we unmute Randy Levine, please?

RANDY LEVINE: Sure. I think we
definitely agree and think that there are a number of
families who are not filling out forms for a variety
of reasons, including fear. But definitely also seen
families who still don’t know about the device
request form. Definitely hearing from families who
thought that their schools filled it out for them,
but when we escalate the case to the DOE, we are
being told there is no request recorded. And so I
think we need a lot more outreach and a coordinated
effort to see what’s happening for children who are
not logging on and for someone to take ownership of
making sure that the request is filled out, that it
is received, that the iPad comes, that the iPad
works, from start to finish. The case is not closed
until the child is logging on and able to participate
in remote construction.
CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you, Randy.

And I also want to note something else I’ve heard and, just to kind of put it into the record that when the DOE gave families that very kind of rushed remote readiness survey—Before they shut the buildings down they gave families a form to fill out to see if they had a device at home. What was not clear to families and, because the DOE did not clarify on their own forms, is that when they asked the family do you have a device at home? You know, there could be, you know, household where mom or dad has a computer for their work and they have multiple children and this was supposed to be a commitment to provide technology for each and every child and not to share a device with their siblings and with her parents. And I kept stressing that. So, I would argue that there are a number of kids who even have a device now who are sharing it with their siblings because the DOE did not make it clear that they are entitled to a device of their own and you cannot, in this climate of remote learning, every moment counts and to share devices is just not acceptable. So, is this something that you could see is happened, as well?
RANDY LEVINE: We have heard of some families who are sharing one device between multiple siblings and I will say that was with a DOE iPad. I think there was a lot of confusion out there in the spring and that there were some people who were telling families that they could only request one device per family. I think with other families, they may not have realized that they need to fill out the form for each child, but we’re also still seeing families who haven’t received any iPads for their children and are sharing an iPhone with limited data among three children trying to log in for remote instruction and assignments. So, we are relieved that the city is purchasing additional devices. That’s only one part of the solution. Significant technical assistance is also needed to make sure that every family is able to use the device, get it up and running and log in to their remote instruction. And, of course, we haven’t even been talking today about instruction because there’s this basic access issue that we have to address first.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Absolutely. And that’s why I mentioned partly an issue of Chromebooks where the feedback that I have gotten back very
strong was that, as far as compatibility and functionality with the remote platform in order to type, calm books are the preferred method, but they are on back order until February or so and they also need to come with Internet service. So, we’re going to keep at this, but, again, I think you, Randy. I think the entire panel for your extraordinary work, for your service, and we will remain in contact during this time. Thank you so much, again. Appreciate you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Okay. That concludes this panel. Next, we will hear from Paul Scialla, Quadira Coles, Toni Smith Thompson, Crystal Vasquez testifying for Leonard Goldberg and Dr. Thomas Howard. We will first start with Paul.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

PAUL SCIALLA: Thank you, Chair Treyger, Chair Levine, and members of the committee for the opportunity to testify. My name is Paul Scialla and I am the founder and CEO of Delos and founder of the International Well Building Institute. We are pleased to already be working with New York City schools by providing 30,000 portable air filtration units for distribution across the city.
Our testimony today is to highlight the importance of minimizing airborne viral load in the indoor environment and the role these units can play to help support New York City’s ability to safely reopen schools. Delos is a health technology platform. We lead global research and identify evidence-based solutions for health and safety. Having worked closely with Mayo Clinic, Cleveland clinic, and other medical research institutions for years to understand the impact of indoor environments on human health. We also operate the world’s largest certification platform for healthy buildings via our International Well Building Institute with certifications now in 63 countries across approximately 1,000,000,000 ft.² of real estate. Previous testimony has acknowledged that increased ventilation, as a foundation, is a good start, but adding enhanced air filtration is a necessary pathway to lower airborne viral load in school buildings and can greatly reduce COVID-19 exposure risk when employed in conjunction with additional best practices. The technology in these air purification units is capable of trapping and reducing ultrafine particles that may be carrying viruses as small as .007 microns at 99.99 percent
efficiency, which is smaller than SARS COV-2. These are portable, wall-mounted, or standalone units that can be placed into any type of space at very low cost. Delos strongly recommends that New York City continue to prioritize improved air quality in schools by ensuring adequate number of air purification units for all classrooms and common areas to complement ventilation strategies. We hope that, in conjunction with the current COVID-19 mitigation strategies, these solutions will benefit students, staff, families, and New York City as a whole.

Sergeant-at-Arms: Time expired.

Chairperson Treyger: If you want to wrap up your final point very quickly and then we will move on.

Paul Scialla: Thank you very much. I just finished, so we do hope that, in conjunction with these mitigation strategies out there, these particular solutions will benefit, again, students, staff, families, and New York City at large. Thank you all.

Committee Counsel: Thank you. And next we will hear from Quadira.
QUADIRA COLES: Good afternoon, Chair Treyger and Levin and member of the Committee of Education and Health. My name is Quadira Coles and I am the policy manager at GGE. We are offering testimony today to raise issues of school climate, inclusive of school discipline and school policing as a part of the reopening of schools. GGE supports both bills on the docket. On Intro 1615, we support the effort to bring specific transparency on the underrepresentation of loss of black educators and educators of color. On Intro 2058, we want to raise a concern we have both hear from both young people and educators that students are being removed from the zoom classroom as a classroom management tool and marked as absent and also the young people are being required to appear on video during class or risk being marked absent. We raise these examples to highlight the new part of the relationship between attendance and school discipline regardless of whether this new form of discipline is being tracked. We also recently found out that schools were sent a link to an outdated disciple called Resources Info Hub that does not acknowledge the pandemic or the
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ways new kinds of learning environments may not be compatible with last years discipline rules. We’ve heard in the past week that principals are requesting principal suspensions for mass compliance despite internal guidance from the DOE’s office of student help that attempts to protect young people from punitive discipline. We want to see that OSH guidance made public and accessible, at the very least, to support young people in knowing that protections are afforded to them. More than this, we are demanding a suspension moratorium during the entire duration of the school year, no matter the instruction style, along with necessary restorative emotional and mental support. Students attending school in person should feel safe when asked to follow CDC social distancing and mask guidelines by positioning nurses, school counselors, and teachers as the first contact. We are disturbed to hear that, because of the short staffing, the DOE trained school safety agents and assigned them the responsibility of take temperatures of students entering school buildings. The city has chosen to normalize a dangerous trend of--

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired.
QUADIRA COLES: public welfare responsibilities to the police. This year, in due part to a legacy of underinvestment, students returning to schools during the pandemic would be more likely to encounter police than nurses. The city has chosen to prioritize the interest of the NYPD and those who are not a part of the school community over New York public school students. Students should not have to face disciplinary police action while trying to adapt to a new way of life in addition to the many challenges and stressors of learning during a pandemic. We encourage the city to become more vigilant when it comes to securing sustainable education experience for our students during budget cycles to come. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. And next, we will hear from Toni Smith Thompson.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

TONI SMITH THOMPSON: Thank you, Chairs Treyger and Levine and members of the committee. My name is Toni Smith Thompson. I’m a senior organizer in the education policy center at the New York Civil Liberties Union. I’m also a public school parent to
three kids. We continue to be concerned about barriers students are facing in remote learning and we do agree that data is needed to assess these barriers and we support Intros 2058 and 2104. Additionally, I wanted to raise a few concerns that were just raised. Remote learning does have the potential to expand access to education in conjunction with in-person instruction, although as was just said, unfortunately, six months and a remote learning, there are practices that are disconnecting students from their learning and further entrenching inequities. Like was just said, we heard reports of schools adopting strict virtual learning policies such as requiring students to have their cameras turned on or be penalized or sit up straight at a desk which some students don’t even have at home. These rules create new constraints on learning that are really unnecessary— and let me turn off my video because I think I’m lacking here. And, you know, not only do camera on roles because anxieties for students who are worried about appearing on camera, they also have privacy implications for students who don’t want their home life exposed and they further marginalized students whose remote
learning environment is already difficult, right? And not the same as their school learning environment. So, we do recommend that the DOE adopt a camera optional policy to be responsive to students needs and to protect student privacy. We are also concerned about discipline, including suspensions, but also removals from in person learning and virtual instruction that may not be recorded as suspensions. We echo calls for a suspension moratorium and also we need to pay attention to other practices in the ways that punitive discipline are evolving in this new landscape. And so, as with pre-pandemic disciplinary practices, black and brown students are more likely to be disciplined and really punitive ways. And so, knowing that it is likely that biases will play a role in how students respond to--

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired.

TONI SMITH THOMPSON: on how schools respond to student behavior, we need to move away from the premises that education can be taken away as a punishment. Instead, we need to look at how the DOE can use this model to expand access to education. Thank you so much.
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COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. And now we will hear from Krystal Vazquez.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

KRYSTAL VAZQUEZ: Hello, Council members, and thank you for this opportunity to testify on school reopening. My name is Krystal Vazquez and I am testifying on behalf of Opportunity Charter Schools founder, Lenny Goldberg. Founded in 2004, OCS is a unique, independent charter school focused on servicing high needs students with disabilities in grades six through 12. We work closely with each student to provide tailored individual and group instruction and our staff includes trained behavior specialists, social workers, and learning specialists to ensure each student has what they need to successful. I’m glad to have the opportunity to share an overview of our approach to working with special education students and how we have brought this philosophy into our recent work supporting our students through remote learning since the onset of the pandemic. We’ve created extensive support systems to keep our students engaged and making progress. Teachers provide five back to back our long classes through zoom four days of the week and,
on Wednesdays, it is our WIN, Whatever-I-Need Day, where students receive targeted small group instruction. We have trained members of our staff to serve as mentors, dedicated to reaching out to families to ensure that students are engaged. We have also created a school culture team to help monitor attendance and ensure students are missing instruction. OCS’s educational philosophy is built upon the premise that students with learning disabilities deserve the satisfaction that comes with meeting and exceeding rigorous standards for personal and academic success and we continue to follow this philosophy through our approach to remote learning in school reopening which we are continuing to reevaluate as we look toward safely reopening our classrooms in the future. Thank you for your time.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. And next we will hear from Dr. Howard Thompson.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Dr. Thomas Howard.

Sorry. I apologize.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Actually, Dr. Thomas, hold on one second. We are just having a
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problem unmuting you. Just give us one moment.
Okay. Do you see an icon that says accept unmuting?
There we go. Okay. Go ahead.
SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.
DR. THOMAS HOWARD: Thank you very much. Again, good afternoon. Good evening, Council members and thank you for the opportunity to speak.
I am Dr. Thomas Howard but I am the executive director at the Bronx Charter School for Better Learning. I am representing parents, staff, and administrators in two located schools and 1023 student’s Pre-K to grade five. At the onset of COVID-19, we began planning to go to remote on March the 6th and we decided that, in preparation for the fall, that we would implement a three phase reopening plan and, in that reopening plan, we would focus on health, safety, and high quality education. We provided quite a bit of training for professional development for parent-- for teachers and administrators and also provided trauma-informed training for parents, teachers, and administrators. On average, with the parent meetings, we had about 367 parents who would attend these trainings and meetings, which was a beautiful thing. We opened our
school year using it fully remote program that focused on social emotional learning and preparing kids for their education all transition, assuming that they had experienced some trauma prior to the opening of schools. We also surveyed parents to understand and ask what their needs were as we prepared to go to reopen the schools. Currently, we have about 25 percent of our students who are in remote learning and about 75 percent of the students who come to school daily for in person remote. Even the students who are in remote also can zoom into the classroom so they get a synchronized learning experience. We transitioned to hybrid learning the first week in October and I can report right now that we have an attendance rate of about 97 percent of all students. 96 percent for special education students in enrollment is full. Our goal is to continue our focus on what we call awakening the learner within. We have had success with our education--

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired.

DR. THOMAS HOWARD: had success with our educational approach, particularly with educating black and brown students. In the things that I would ask that the Council and everyone do is that we
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promote high quality education for all students in New York City no matter what type of school you go to. That every student who is black, brown, and other should receive the best quality education that we can get in, as we shift away from health and safety, that we prioritize high quality education.

To speak with you today.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Chair, do you have any questions for this panel?

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: No. Just want to thank them for being here today and sharing very powerful testimony. Thank you so much.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. And we will now move to our next and final panel. Final panel is Daryl Hornick Becker, Gregory Brender, Vallone Brown Jr., and Paulette Healy. We will start with Daryl.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

DARYL HORNICK BECKER: Good afternoon. My name is Daryl Hornick Becker and I am a policy associate at Assistance Committee for Children of New York. Thank you, Chair Treyger, Chair Levine, and all the members of the Education and Health Committees for holding today’s hearing. For our full
set of recommendations, I refer you to my written testimony. Today, I will highlight just a few areas where action is sorely needed. First, the city and DOE must prioritize our most vulnerable students. Students living in shelters might have a learning device, but most shelters still lack Wi-Fi and many have unreliable cell reception. Also, under city policy, children under 18 cannot be in shelters without apparent, but the cities learning labs are only open to students through eighth grade. This range of barriers requires a coordinated interagency plan to help these students and a designated point person to lead this effort. Remote learning is also likely to exacerbate issues for multilingual learners. The complex nature of the school year has deepened the communication barrier for immigrant families who are also left out of receiving vital information about scheduling, transportation, or meals. The DOE must make a concerted effort to reach these families in a variety of ways. The DOE must also not cut programs that serve under credited youth who are most at risk of dropping out. Cuts to learning to work would eliminate services for these students such as attendance outreach, counseling, and
postgraduate planning. To defund this program now would remove crucial supports when students need the most. Second, the city’s afterschool programs must also be part of their restart plan. Afterschool providers this year have received conflicting guidance from DYCD and DOE as to how they operate. Many are being shut out of schools and their funding may be at risk in the November budget. Youth service providers successfully ran the RECS last school year and are currently running the learning labs. They must be intimately involved in the new school year to ensure the entire educational system is safe, effective, and supportive. Finally, the city must support the behavioral health needs of students. With the transition to remote learning, many children are experiencing social isolation, anxiety, and possibly the loss of a loved one from COVID. The proposed bridge to school plan is a start, but we cannot expect schools to implement plans when the funding sources have been slashed at the city, state, and federal--

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired.

DARYL HORNICK BECKER: level. To strengthen behavioral supports for students, the city
must restore the cuts to community schools and fund contracts that provide mental health services. Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: And before he turned Gregory, I also see that Phil Wong is back on zoom, so we will add him to this panel at the end. But next we will hear from Gregory.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

GREGORY BRENDER: Good afternoon. Thank you so much for holding this important hearing and for the opportunity to testify. My name is Gregory Brender. I am here on behalf of United Neighborhood Houses which is a policy and social change organization of New York Settlement Houses. I want to focus today on the role that community-based organizations play in the education system. Community-based organizations are a key part of the system and have only become more essential during the COVID crisis. During the crisis, CBO’s deployed their staff and regional enrichment centers and used their expertise in early childhood education and youth development to pilot and implement the first socially distant programs. They developed with only a few weeks of prep time, socially distant in person
summer camp programs and remote summer camp programs. They maintain children’s connections to their peers and carrying adult for remote early childhood education afterschool programs and, most recently, and also with very little prep time, they have been opening learning bridges and learning labs to provide care during the remote days of school. But the city has to do much more to include CBO’s who should be a part of all of the discussions or how the education system and how the school reopens. In order to be more inclusive and more supportive of the community-based partners who are so important to schools. UNH makes the following recommendations: we urge the city to improve guidance and communication. Guidance is often missing, late, or conflicting and this has led to issues such as afterschool programs not knowing where they have space, lack of communication about health issues, and difficulty accessing PPE. All run through the next recommendations. Also, to restore funding for the indirect rate initiatives, to restore funding for learning to work which provides support to students in transfer schools, and to ensure that there is parity between the protections afforded to staff in the DOE and the staff and community-based
organizations who are entering hazardous situations
to provide care to children. Thanks again for the
opportunity to testify.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. And

next we will hear from Valone Brown Jr.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

VALONE BROWN JR.: Good afternoon. Thank

you for having me to discuss some policy changes this
afternoon. My name is Valone Brown Junior. I am the
director of the Learn to Work program for St. Nick’s
Alliance. I have been the director for three years
now. As Gregory just mentioned, I’m hoping that the
Learning to Work program is not eliminated and cuts
aren’t sought. I would like to thank Councilman
Kallos who has been an astounding supporter of our
program. I have been on this call from 10 AM, so
that should let everyone know on this call how
passionate I am about LTW and the possible cuts.
This program being cut and gutted and eliminated
would not just affect the employees that are CBO’s
that partner with the school. These are individuals
who have given their livelihoods to have given back
to their communities, to the students and the
children of our future. But, most importantly, it
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will affect the families and the students. The Learn to Work program, if you do not know, is the program that is in transfer schools throughout the city. Transfer schools house students who are underage and over credited. These students are at the most risk. These students are in these schools because they are looking for their second, third, fourth, fifth chants. We cannot cut programs like LTW that offers these students the ability to earn wages to help their parents. Especially in a pandemic now. Our program has been able to fuel at least $150,000 a year into the northern Brooklyn community. With the program being gutted, we lose all that money going into the neighborhoods. Going into the families. Once again, not only does the program allow wages for our interns and for our students, but it exposes students to career readiness through internships, post-secondary readiness, visiting various colleges, vocational training opportunities. So, Chancellor Carranza and the mayor, you have 15 months left. Please take the time to do what is right and do not cut our program. We need this for the individuals--

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired.
VALONE BROWN JR.: their livelihood, to their jobs, and please think of the students who really need this program to continue their education and finally graduate from high school. Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. And, next, we will hear from Paulette.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: You are unmuted now.

PAULETTE HEALY: Can you hear me?

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes.

PAULETTE HEALY: Wonderful. Greetings esteemed Council members. My name is Paulette Healy. I am a council member on the Citywide Council on Special Education and a steering member of Press NYC. I, along with hundreds of parents who have spoken at nausea about a responsive, safe, and equitable school reopening with the emphasis on investing and addressing the challenges with remote learning instead of rushing to a horribly underfunded in person learning approach, ignoring known ventilation issues, staffing shortages, and access to devices and Wi-Fi service, so I am not going to repeat myself again. Instead, I want to address the intentional misguidance have put into practice in order to
continue the systemic silencing of the voices of the stakeholders, especially our teachers, parents, and students. In this hearing alone, we have heard conflicting statements from the Chancellor and his staff on the COVID reporting process, on whether data on consent forms for random testing is available, whether attendance numbers are available, whether guidance has been updated to school staff, tasked to rollout information on the ground. Dr. Barba himself said that the best way to prevent the spread of the virus is to limit the amount of people in the buildings. What better argument for going fully remote than that? Students who have received devices are reporting they are broken and need to go through it unnecessarily complicated process to report it. Teachers are troubleshooting tech issues built into the DOE iPads themselves that prevent platforms that they used to teach from launching, instead of actually spending time teaching. We have a letter from PS 142 in district 1 sighting, quote, bulging remote class sizes and ICT classes are out of compliance, end quote, due to the staffing shortages. We have teachers threatening to fail students who miss to Google meet sessions. Is this what trauma
center teaching looks like? We have an entire school community speak out about the harm their families have endured at the hands of a racist principal at PS 132 in district 14, yet nothing has been done. We have reports of students being forced to submit to random testing in schools without parental consent.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired.

PAULETTE HEALY: We have superintendents that have done nothing to quell concerns of the families and absolutely no best practices in place to make sure information is going out to our families and languages that they can understand or have access to if they are still awaiting a device to learn off of. In the middle of October, we still have families on waiting lists for the paltry number of childcare seats offered in learning bridges and 72,000 students still waiting for devices. I urge the Council members here to please use their collective power to institute universal broadband for all in order to address the digital divide that prevents our children from a free and appropriate education. I urge city Council to continue demanding accountability from the Chancellor and the DOE often given to you because you are the only body that seems to have the possibility
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to apply pressure. In this crisis, we need you all
to keep this up and I thank you city Council members
and the public advocate office who have acknowledged
the outraged voices of our parents and teachers,
school staff, food servers, custodians, and have
recognized and supported our endless efforts to keep
our children safe and to demand clear accountability
from our district leaders, our school leaders, and
our DO eat leaders. Thank you so much for the time.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Next we
will hear from Phil Wong.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

PHIL WONG: Hello. Good afternoon,
Chairman Treyger, Chairman Levine, other members of
the education committee. Thank you for giving me the
opportunity to speak. My name is Phil Wong, the
president of the Community Education Council 24. I
would like to read to you today our resolution number
139 that was passed on October 13th at October’s
monthly meeting of CEC members. Whereas the COVID-19
epidemic has taken a multitude of lives of those
living and working within district 24, whereas COVID-
19 epidemic has disproportionately distributed the
health—disturbed the health, well-being, and
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education of students in district 24, whereas Mayor de Blasio has already twice delayed the opening of schools, creating hurdles with district 24 families to plan daily work and education schedules, whereas Mayor de Blasio and Chancellor Carranza has been less than transparent and disclosing that thousands of unfilled teacher positions needed to meet the demand of schools as projected in their plans, whereas Mayor de Blasio and Chancellor Carranza have still not properly staffed New York City public schools with a sufficient number of teachers and staff to safely meet the educational, psychological, and physical needs of our students. Whereas numerous high-ranking officials at the Department of Education resigned within weeks and days of the planned opening. Whereas the Department of Education did not implement a system wide training and staff in remote learning through the summer. Whereas the Department of Education and the city of New York have not properly coordinated, managed, and communicated the locations for meal distribution to remote learning students, blended rowboats students on their days not at school, and individuals in need of food. Whereas the Department of Education has not delivered on their
own goal of providing live instruction to all remote learning students—

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired.

PHIL WONG: Therefore be it resolved that New York City schools must provide an equitable distribution of teachers so that every school has the proper staffing for live event remote instruction be it further resolved that the Community Education Council expresses no confidence in Mayor de Blasio and Chancellor Carranza due to their repeated failure of policy implementation and communication throughout the COVID-19 emergency. Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. And, at this time, I will ask if we have inadvertently missed anyone that would like to testify. There were a few people dropping in and out of zoom today. Please use the raise hand function now and we will call you in the order that your hand is raised. Hallie Yee and then, Chair Treyger, Council member Holden does have a question for this panel.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts— Sorry.

Time starts now.

MARY CHEN: Hi. Thank you, Chair Levine, Chair Treyger, and the members of city Council, for
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the opportunity to [inaudible 06:33:45] today. My name is Mary Chen. I’m the director of CPC’s child development services overseeing 12 early childhood and school-age programs and that is [inaudible 06:33:57] our constituents as agents of social change. To that end, we are grateful to testify today about the issues that impact individuals and the families we serve. We are grateful to the Council on their leadership on these issues. By written testimony addresses the following concerns: quality programing, child depression, community-based [inaudible 06:34:21] capacity, transparency, and accountability, and [inaudible 06:34:24]. Especially, in CPC’s early childhood and school-age programs, they are truly critical safety nets with thousands of working class AAPI and immigrant families. When schools close, our services are shifted to remote settings. Staff continue to provide services nonstop and creatively integrated their programming on to an online format. Understanding how critical staying connected with the families is at this time. However, the programming that was guided by what teachers did was really by their own true drive and passion and, without
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guidance and input from DOE. We are still unable to increase the early childhood [inaudible 06:35:08] capacity and technology, equipment and bandwidth makes it really hard to be effective in supporting all our families. And one of the things I want to really stress about was that we’ve been talking about social distancing in schools and, in public schools, they had a minimum of, at least, 50 percent cuts in classroom size to allow for social distancing, but in CBO’s, this is not the case. There’s only been a 15 percent decrease from full programming and, for the younger classrooms, the classroom size remained--

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired.

MARY CHEN: So, it’s really important and crucial that DOE and DOH recognized that CBO’s are providing crucial care for all of these immigrant and low income families, but at the same time, we’re not doing it with the same guidances that is needed. With that said, [inaudible 06:36:02] in the written testimony and I just wanted to stress that point in the confusion that DOE has been giving [inaudible 06:36:12] in terms of not being clear with information that we can disseminate to our families. But that is really one of the things that is making
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it hard for families to really make adequate
decisions with their own children and the well-being
of their families. Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. If we
could please unmute Council member Holden. He had a
question for this panel.

COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Hi.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Thank you. I have
a question for Phil Wong. Is he still on? Phil?
Are you still there?

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: He is. We will
unmute him. Just give us one moment.

PHIL WONG: Hello? Hello?

COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Yes. Yes. Hi, Mr.
Wong.

PHIL WONG: Hello.

COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: I have a question
on the CEC 24 voting as a no confidence for not only
the Chancellor and the mayor’s handling of the
reopening or lack thereof. What is the number one
complaint that you have in your district?

PHIL WONG: The number one complaint is
that the kids are not receiving the education they
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are entitled to. They believe they have seen Catholic schools that’s open five days and they believe the public school should do the same or learn from them to start opening five days. And, as I hear, there are kids leaving the public school system and now entering Catholic school. A very, very concerned about that.

COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: I heard that, too. Just in the-- We’re also hearing, at least in my office. I don’t know if you are hearing it over at CEC, that some of the remote learners are finishing their work within 10 or 15 minutes and have nothing to do the rest of the day.

PHIL WONG: That is correct. The instruction that is being offered remotely is not adequate. The kids have nothing to do like before 10 or 11 AM and that is a big problem.

COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: So, in your district, not the CEC wants full in person five days a week in school? You’re saying that?

PHIL WONG: That is correct. That is correct.

COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Okay. Thank you.

PHIL WONG: Sure.
COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Thanks so much.

Thank you, Chair.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Chair Treyger, I will pass it back to you.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you very much, Malcolm, and thank you to my colleagues and to everyone who came to testify today. You know, I want to summarize by going back to a point I made earlier in the hearing about trust being broken in the impact of that trust being broken. The mayor publicly said that the majority of families indicated to his administration that they wanted in person, hybrid blended model when, in fact, the survey results are showing the opposite, not because that families and kids don’t want, you know, the critical services of the in-person services, but because, I think, trust remains broken and shattered as far as the ability to operationalize all of the safety plans and to have the staffing and everything in place. The mayor promised that those children who would opt for in person learning would receive in person instruction, but, as I mentioned before, that is not the case for many children. They have in person study hall, virtual study hall, without a teacher present. And I
I am a former teacher, so you cannot pull a fast one on me. That is not instruction. That is simply someone supervising kids logging on to Zoom if they have Internet in their class. If they have a device. The mayor, you know, made a promise that every child who needed technology and Internet already had it and today we finally learned that, as of yesterday, over 72,000 requests are still in the system for children in need of devices and Internet. We learned today from President Mulgrew, that it was only until July that the administration began to think of what a reopening plan might look like for the school year ahead when, in fact, under normal years, you begin planning for the next school year back in, maybe, February. Even sooner. So, there is an expression that I apply from the school system to hear. When you fail to plan, you plan to fail. And our children, our educators, our families, our parents deserve so much better. The mayor promised that he had a childcare plan. There is a childcare crisis right now. There is no question about it. Many educators themselves are parents. One educator reached out to meet that the cost of childcare for her kids exceeds what she brings home in pay.
Children of essential workers, folks who are working in our hospitals and emergency care centers who are seeing spikes in cases, they have been failed. They deserve so much better. In any part of our function, as Leonie Haimson mentioned, the Council is limited in our authority, but we do have the power of oversight. We have the power to shine light on problems and we will continue to do everything within our power. I want to note, for the record, that the administration might be annoyed to answer questions for four hours or so, but, if they would’ve given us the information that we asked for back in May-- if they would’ve given us the information that we asked for in a letter that we sent them in the summer, if they would’ve showed up to my hearing on September 3rd, we could have addressed many of the questions that I had to repeat not for the first time, second time, but third, fourth times at this hearing today. So, no one is going to lecture this body or this committee and this Council and the staff about ground rules when, in fact, they have failed to provide the transparency and the full information that we need. We don’t even know the cost of this private school bus company deal at a time when we just heard from
and I know this personally -- how vital the Learning to Work program it is. It’s not just a program. It is a support system. It is a lifeline. It is a connection. It literally keeps them in school. That is what is at stake right now. This is not a program that, you know -- this is a lifeline. A support system for kids. The community school program. So, the city administration has to answer why they prioritized a private school bus company bailout over the childcare needs of families, over providers that are doing lifesaving work and came changing work for kids on an everyday basis. We are going to continue to demand answers because we have a lot more questions that we have after today’s hearing and I hope that we try to clarify some of the confusion, although, with the stuff that we are today, I think there is going to call but unfortunately, being even more confusion. But we have a lot more work to do to clarify and to provide full transparency to our school families who deserve nothing less. And I will close by saying, but again, every tweet from City Hall, everything they put out at night or everything is not done without the implementation of our school communities. They
implement everything. From early childhood, K to 12, all of them. They implement all of the guidance. We are in debt to our school communities, to our families, everyone. And that includes PTA, CEC, all of our school support systems. The advocates here. We are in debt to you. We appreciate you and we have a lot more work to do. And, with that, I will adjourn-- Oh?

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We're going to turn it over to Chair Levine.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Oh. Forgive me. Chair Levine, forgive me. My extraordinary colleague. The fellow co-Chair of the Mark Caucus. I want folks to know that I follow Chair Levine, his twitter, to get all the latest critical health updates. He has been extraordinary in giving transparency to the public. He helps me get information, as well. He’s done a fantastic job as the Chair of the Health Committee. Please, Mark Levine, if you want to close us out. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: I certainly will.

Thank you, Chair Treyger. There is nobody in New York City who cares more than you about the welfare of our students, of our staff, of our school system
and I want to thank you for prioritizing health and safety throughout this entire crisis. You and I communicate constantly. I really value that partnership. In our work is not done. This crisis is not over. This pandemic is not over. And I think this hearing is been extremely important today both for the questions that we answered and for the questions that were not answered. We are not going to stop until we get the information that the public deserves, that parents deserve, that we need to ensure that we are living up to the highest standards of safety in this pandemic. And that requires clear, consistent enforcement of the protocols we have established. To test. To contact trees. To monitor the people’s health. To make critical decisions about closing classrooms and schools and entire districts. And that requires information offered to be transparent, real-time way to the public. And we do not have some of that information today. This hearing has highlighted the shortcomings that we must address. And to all of you who have participated, the parents, teachers, the experts, thank you for coming today. For being on the record. For staying and for fighting on behalf of the young people whose
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responsibility we hold in our hands. So, thank you, everybody, and be safe.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Just one thing, Chairs.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Yes, Malcom?

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: I just want to make sure we don’t cut off your colleagues. Council member Holden, your hand is up. I don’t know if that was from before and we forgot to put it down. Can we unmute Council member Holden for a minute, please?

There we go.

COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: I just want to thank both Chairs for this hearing. We have learned a lot, but I still-- you know, I agree with Chair Levine that we do have a lot of questions that were unanswered. I know the Chancellor-- I’ve been a critic of the Chancellor for a while and I think he proved me right with the attempted reopening a number of times of the school year. I don’t think they were prepared. I agree with Chair Treyger. And, by the way, I want to thank him. If they just took some of his recommendations on reopening, they would’ve had a much better time and I just thank him for just a great work and, like you just said, Chair Treyger,
about Chair Levine looking at his tweets, I often look at yours and really, really felt that you had great ideas on reopening and I just think they should have listened to a few of them. Certainly, the earlier years. The younger students should have been given priority. Also, at risk students, special needs students, students with learning disabilities should be given priority because many of them can’t work remotely. It’s impossible. So, that should have been a top priority and I don’t think it was. But I just want to thank you, Chair Treyger, again, for your great work on education and thank you for this hearing and I loved the exchange with the Translator. You’re not going to tell us how to run a hearing and you’re not going to tell us how to do our jobs. And I thank you for that. Standing up to him.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you. Thank you, Council member Holden. And on that note, I just want to say that I worked on a proposal with actual educators and parents and families throughout the summer. I waited for the state to release their guidance to see if it was consistent and I felt that we had to pass it equity test for kids and for families. There are children, particularly young
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children, children with special needs, multilingual
learners, and others where one day a week is just not
cutting it. Working parents facing impossible
childcare situations. And we have to make our
largest school system in the country more manageable.
I think we are too big to come back at once, but we
could phase this in and making sure we have the
resources to operationalize safety plans and have a
responsible phased-in approach. And, having said
that, there is no excuse why, to this day, thousands
of children still don’t have a device and Internet.
That’s just inexcusable to me. And I just want to
give a big shout out and thanks as we close to the
extraordinary counsel staff. They are extraordinary.
They work even harder than all of us and they are
great. My staff and my Chief of Staff and others.
My entire staff in my team, I think all of you for
your great work and your sacrifice on behalf of the
city of New York. And, with that, I will adjourn.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Council member
Treyger, before you do gavel out, they wanted me to
remind the public that’s on and watching that next
week we have another hearing. Reopening New York
City public schools’ impact on students with
disabilities. Same bat time. Same bat channel. So, I’m now done. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Yes. We’ll be back. We’ll be back. There’s more. Thank you, Malcom. Thank you all. This hearing is adjourned.

[gavel]
CERTIFICATE

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 October 30, 2020