

NYC again reopens schools to in-person learning

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A student's graffiti is written on a sidewalk in front of New York's City Hall during a protest by parents and students opposing the closing of schools, Thursday, Nov. 19, 2020. Mayor Bill de Blasio announced Wednesday that the nation's largest school system will move to remote learning only as the city tries to tamp down a growing number of coronavirus cases. (AP Photo/Mark Lennihan)

It's back to school again for some New York City schoolchildren, weeks after the schools were closed to in-person learning because of rising COVID-19 cases.

The nation's largest public school system, which shut down in-person learning last month, on Monday brought back preschool students and children in kindergarten through fifth grade whose parents chose a mix of in-school and remote learning.

"We've proven that we can do it safely, and parents want that for their children," Schools Chancellor Richard Carranza told cable news station NY1 in a call-in interview.

Special education students in all grades who have

particularly complex needs will be welcomed back starting Thursday. Middle and high school will remain all remote at least until after the holiday break, Mayor Bill de Blasio has said.

De Blasio announced Nov. 18 that public school buildings would close because the city had crossed a threshold set earlier of 3% of all the coronavirus tests performed over a seven-day period coming back positive.

The rate of positive tests is now over 5%, according to the city's figures, but de Blasio has said it's safe to reopen schools with beefed-up testing protocols—in part because few infections have been linked to transmission inside schools.



Parents and children gather in front of New York's City Hall to protest the closing of public schools, Thursday, Nov. 19, 2020. Mayor Bill de Blasio announced Wednesday that the nation's largest school system will move to remote learning only as the city tries to tamp down a growing number of coronavirus cases. (AP Photo/Mark Lennihan)

"Our schools are safer than pretty much any place else in New York City," de Blasio said Friday on WNYC radio. "So I really think everyone in the

school community can feel secure because so many measures are in place to protect everyone."

Since the beginning of the school year in mid-September, more than 1,740 students and 2,240 staff in the public school system have gotten the virus, according to city statistics.

De Blasio announced on Nov. 29 that school buildings serving younger children and special-needs students would reopen with coronavirus testing increased from monthly to weekly. Masks and social distancing are required at all city schools.

About 190,000 students will be eligible to return to school buildings starting Monday.

After closing schools in March, New York City was one of the first large U.S. cities to reopen school buildings in September, but the majority of parents chose online-only learning for their children.

Children whose parents chose the hybrid model were previously inside physical classrooms from one to three days a week, but de Blasio said some students will now be in their school buildings five days a week. Carranza said over 150 schools would start doing so this week, with more to come.

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