

THE CITY OF NEW YORK
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MAYOR DE BLASIO AND CHANCELLOR CARRANZA ANNOUNCE “OUTDOOR LEARNING” INITIATIVE

NEW YORK—Mayor de Blasio and Schools Chancellor Richard A. Carranza today announced "Outdoor Learning", a citywide outdoor learning initiative for the 2020-21 academic year. The program will allow schools to hold classes outdoors in schoolyards, adjacent streets, and nearby park space. The program is open to all public, charter, and private schools, as well as Learning Bridges. Schools in areas hardest-hit by COVID-19 with no outdoor space will receive priority for the program.

“We are doing everything in our power to bring our kids back to school safely,” said **Mayor Bill de Blasio**. “Outdoor Learning will give all of our children the quality education they deserve in a safe and socially distanced environment.”

“As a teacher and school leader, I always knew how important it was for kids to get some time outdoors, and as we get closer to reopening I’m excited to offer Outdoor Learning to schools across the City, even those without a yard,” said **Schools Chancellor Richard A.**

Carranza. Our students need time to run and play, explore and create in a safe, socially distanced way. Outdoor Learning provides more of that, more often, and we are grateful to our sister agencies for working together to make this possible

Beginning today, school principals can submit a request for learning space in school adjacent streets and nearby parks. Schools that wish to use their own, on-site yards are also being asked to fill out the survey to notify the Department of Education. Proposals submitted by Friday, August 28th will receive responses by September 4th. Additional requests can also be submitted on a rolling basis.

The Department of Education will work to accommodate schools’ requests to the greatest extent possible, unless the arrangement will not be feasible or safe.” All submissions will be reviewed by an interagency working group comprised of the Department of Parks & Recreation, Department of Transportation, Department of Sanitation, FDNY, NYPD. Schools must provide barriers and staffing to close any street. When submitting a street location, schools are strongly encouraged to select streets with the following criteria:

- Is a quiet, non-commercial street;
- Is a one-way street; if two-way, not more than one lane of traffic in each direction;
- Is not an MTA bus route or truck route;
- Is not used by a police/fire station, parking garage, or hospital.

The City encourages schools to hold classes that require additional spacing per public health guidelines, such as Physical Education, Art, Music Chorus and Drama in an outdoor setting. Additional academic classes can also be conducted outdoors where space permits if a school has an interest in doing so.

New York City's plan for reopening schools is among the most rigorous in the world, with Outdoor Learning being one of many tools the City is using to guarantee a safe reopening. The program will prioritize schools in neighborhoods hardest hit by the pandemic with no outdoor space at their schools:

Borough	Neighborhood
Bronx	Van Cortland Park and Jerome Park
Bronx	Soundview and Soundview Bruckner
Bronx	Mott Haven and Melrose
Bronx	Longwood and Hunts Point
Bronx	Highbridge
Bronx	East Tremont
Bronx	Morris Heights
Bronx	Morrisania and Crotona
Manhattan	Washington Heights and Inwood
Manhattan	Hamilton Heights and Morningside Heights
Manhattan	LES and Chinatown
Manhattan	East Harlem
Manhattan	Central Harlem
Brooklyn	Brighton Beach
Brooklyn	Brownsville
Brooklyn	East New York and Starrett City
Brooklyn	Sunset Park
Brooklyn	Canarsie
Brooklyn	Bushwick
Brooklyn	Bed-stuy
Brooklyn	East Flatbush
Queens	Corona
Queens	Briarwood
Queens	Jamaica
Queens	Rockaway and Far Rockaway
Queens	Queensbridge
Staten Island	Stapleton - St. George

"From Open Streets to Open Restaurants, New York City has shown the crucial role that streets can play in aiding our recovery from COVID-19," said **NYC DOT Commissioner Polly**

Trottenberg. "For the new school year, Outdoor Learning is the next step. Working closely with the DOE and our agency partners, we will find and assess streets and other outdoor locations suitable for safely hosting students, prioritizing communities of color hit hardest by the pandemic

"The Fire Department is committed to the safety of all New Yorkers. We will work closely with our fellow agencies, including the Department of Education, to ensure a safe learning environment for students and a continued quick response to all fires and medical emergencies."

"I am glad DOE is providing spaces for outdoor learning to take place in these hardest-hit neighborhoods, responding to the calls of parent activists, teacher and administrator unions, and elected officials like myself," said **State Senator Robert Jackson**. "The science of COVID-19 suggests this is the safest option as long as the weather permits. There's much more work to be done before schools are ready to open their doors safely for in-person learning, but this program is a step in the right direction."

"I think outdoor learning is a wonderful opportunity to educate our children while decreasing the possible spread of coronavirus," said **State Senator James Sanders Jr.** "I think more of this outside the box thinking is needed as we approach the upcoming school year while adjusting to the new normal."

"This is an important response to advocacy by concerned and proactive parents," said **Assemblymember Cathy Nolan**. "With the help of NYPD and other City agencies, working together during this unprecedented time, students will be able to take advantage of the innovation inherent in New York City living. Now more than ever, families and the Department of Education itself are being asked to think outside the box. This initiative demonstrates yet another way New York is leading the country in living, learning, and working in the age of COVID19."

"All New York's students should have access to safe educational environments," said **Assistant Assembly Speaker Feliz Ortiz**. "Allowing schools to use space outdoors to conduct classes enhances educational opportunities for all students during this time of social distancing. Outdoor Learning will provide an extension of the classroom, allowing students to move about more freely and breathe fresh air. Nothing is more important to me than the education and safety of our children."

"Safety must be our first priority, and schools should never be a place of fear. I applaud this creative use of public space. We must continue to listen to the concerns of parents, students, and teachers and face these challenges as a community," said **Assemblymember Mathilde Frontus**.

"With the concerns expressed by parents, teachers and guardians about sending their children back into classrooms during this pandemic, I commend this alternative proposal to utilize outdoor spaces during the reopening of our schools. Additional outdoor learning opportunities will help the mental and physical well-being of our teachers and their students and support the continuation of learning. Given the impact of COVID-19 on the North Shore, expanding this

opportunity to more Staten Island schools will be crucial for the continued safety of our school communities”, said **Assemblymember Charles D. Fall**.

"The NYC School Survey informed us that the majority of parents in the city want their children to return to an in-person learning model,” **Assemblymember Rodneyse Bichotte**. “ The citywide Outdoor Learning initiative will help students and teachers to stay safe this Fall while continuing to prioritize education. We know that outdoor gatherings are lower risk when it comes to virus transmission. I am glad to see the city prioritizing schools in the hardest-hit neighborhoods, like my district, which includes East Flatbush, Brooklyn, for the program."

“As we are gearing up for schools to reopen, we need to be taking all proper safety measures to keep students, teachers, and school staff safe. We need to make sure all of the streets adjacent to schools are closed for students to use. Outdoor learning will add an additional layer of safety measures that will keep students and teachers safe,” said **Council Member Ydanis Rodriguez, Chairman of the Transportation Committee**. “I look forward to working alongside Mayor de Blasio, DOE Chancellor Carranza, and the NYPD to ensure we are installing all proper street protections to keep students and teachers safe during the school day.”

“Outdoor space in streets, parks, and playgrounds will give schools much needed flexibility as they plan to safely bring our students and teachers together this fall -- for outdoor lunch, gym, recess, instruction, and related services, said **Council Member Brad Lander**. “I’m grateful to the city leaders who listened to our pleas for this common sense plan to increase the footprint of our schools at this urgent moment. Prioritizing opening streets and providing park permits in neighborhoods that have been hardest hit by the pandemic is important to mitigate the inequities that shape so much of our city. And I’m especially happy to see the Department of Education adopt our idea to strongly encourage PTAs who purchase tents or gear for their own schools to contribute an equal amount for schools that don’t have those resources. For access to outdoor space -- and, of course, for our schools far more broadly -- to really be equitable, we need far more resources from the federal government and the state.”

"Outdoor learning is one of the very best strategies that we can pursue to keep our students, teachers, school staff, and communities safe during the pandemic. I strongly support every effort to move learning activities outside --significantly reducing the possibility of virus transmission-- and I applaud the DOE and all education staff who are putting this into motion," said **Council Member Helen Rosenthal**.

"Safety remains the number one concern for the reopening of New York City schools," said **Council Member Ben Kallos**. "Thank you to the Department of Education and the Mayor's office for hearing the request from concerned parents, elected officials and making it so."

“For weeks, principals, teachers, parents, and yes, students, have been looking to innovative ideas like open streets to safely expand in-person learning capacity in New York City,” said **Councilwoman Carlina Rivera**. “I am glad that the Mayor and Chancellor have recognized ‘outdoor learning’ as an essential part of school re-opening during the pandemic, and I look forward to working with them and school administrators to successfully implement this program in my district and beyond.”

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