



The Research Bureau

Bureau Brief—Hybrid Learning Opt-in Rates in Worcester Public Schools

This brief is a companion to an interactive map and chart showing an expanded version of this dataset, sortable by school and geographic location. [That project is available here.](#)

“Back to school” day is usually in the fall, but this school year, Worcester Public Schools (WPS) students will be returning to in-person classrooms on March 29, more than six months after the virtual start of the academic year and around 12 months after the first government restrictions to curtail the spread of COVID-19 began.

The resumption of in-person learning comes with many caveats and conditions. WPS will operate under a “hybrid” model, where students will come into classrooms in two-day per week shifts (“cohorts”), continuing with remote learning on days they are not physically in school, to allow for social distancing other pandemic mitigation measures in schools. Some students, such as those with complex, significant disabilities, returned to classrooms slightly earlier.

Families can opt in to the hybrid model or choose to remain entirely remote. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts has mandated districts offer a return to five-day-a-week, in-person learning starting April 5 (for lower grades) or April 28 (for grades 6-8), with high school details to be announced, but Worcester successfully applied for a K-8 waiver to push that start date to May 3. Some parents may be eager to send their children back to school for real or perceived improvements in educational quality, while others may hold back because of a belief that the risk of contracting or spreading COVID-19 remains too high to risk classroom situations. This brief will lay out who is choosing to go back to in-person learning and who is staying virtual at this major turning point for WPS.

Hybrid Opt-in Patterns

According to data released by WPS, out of 24,043 students enrolled in all grade levels and programs, 53 percent have been opted into hybrid learning and 44 percent have been opted out and will remain remote, with 3 percent failing to respond.

Elementary school parents are the most likely to opt their children into hybrid learning—54 percent chose that path over continuing fully remotely, compared to 52 percent of middle schoolers and 51 percent of high schoolers. Around 56 percent of the nearly 600 students in alternative programs such as the Gerald Creamer Center or Head Start are also opted in to hybrid learning.

All WPS schools belong to one of four regional quadrants, and some quadrants have higher hybrid opt-in rates than others. **Doherty, the westernmost quadrant, saw 58 percent of its student body opted into hybrid learning. North—which, despite its name, is the easternmost quadrant—saw 54 percent opt for hybrid learning. Burncoat, the northernmost, saw 53 percent opt for hybrid, while South, the southernmost, saw 49 percent opt for hybrid.**

Demographic divides also persist. District-wide, **62 percent of white students were opted into hybrid learning, compared to 45 percent of Hispanic students, 52 percent of Black Non-Hispanic students, 46 percent of Asian students and 44 percent of American Indian students,** according to data provided by WPS. White students and Hispanic students will each represent 37 percent of total hybrid enrollment, despite the fact that white students are 29 percent of total district enrollment and Hispanic students are 43 percent.

These demographic differences have an impact on the individual school level. **Schools where the student body is at least 40 percent white saw 64 percent of the students opted into hybrid learning, while schools where more than 40 percent of students are nonwhite opted in at a rate of 51 percent.** The pattern holds true for the Hispanic population—**schools where Hispanic students are less than 30 percent of enrollment had a 66 percent hybrid opt-in rate, while schools where Hispanic students are at least 30 percent of the population had a 51 percent hybrid opt-in rate.**

The following page includes a complete accounting of hybrid opt-in rates by school, not counting alternative programs. Data is accurate as of the most recent Worcester School Committee update (2/12/2021).

Chart 1: Percent of Students Opted Into Hybrid Learning by School

School	Enrollment	Hybrid	Remote	Percent Nonwhite (of Total Student Body)	Percent Hispanic (of Total Student Body)	Quadrant
Nelson Place	541	71%	28%	49%	19%	Doherty
Worcester Arts Magnet School	357	69%	31%	54%	21%	Burncoat
Flagg Street	339	69%	30%	27%	13%	Doherty
Heard Street	245	66%	34%	56%	27%	South
Tatnuck	393	65%	35%	57%	25%	Doherty
Lake View	311	65%	35%	58%	23%	North
May Street	279	65%	34%	58%	22%	Doherty
West Tatnuck	332	64%	30%	47%	21%	Doherty
Worcester Technical High	1,465	63%	35%	66%	38%	Citywide
Roosevelt	609	62%	37%	63%	30%	North
Canterbury	296	61%	39%	81%	52%	South
Forest Grove Middle	905	60%	38%	59%	35%	Doherty
Columbus Park	370	58%	39%	75%	50%	South
Midland Street	202	58%	42%	46%	21%	Doherty
Gates Lane	520	57%	43%	73%	39%	South
Wawecus Road School	125	57%	43%	71%	45%	Burncoat
Burncoat Middle School	677	57%	43%	69%	42%	Burncoat
Elm Park Community	401	56%	43%	78%	59%	Doherty
Doherty Memorial High	1,327	55%	45%	62%	36%	Doherty
Burncoat Street	257	55%	41%	76%	55%	Burncoat
Clark Street Community	233	54%	45%	85%	55%	Burncoat
Thorndyke Road	352	54%	45%	60%	31%	Burncoat
Norrback Avenue	524	54%	34%	67%	31%	Burncoat
Vernon Hill School	477	53%	46%	82%	51%	South
Jacob Hiatt Magnet	382	53%	47%	88%	48%	Doherty
Lincoln Street	245	51%	47%	85%	55%	Burncoat
Belmont Street Community	538	51%	49%	81%	51%	North
North High	1,185	51%	49%	83%	53%	North
Quinsigamond	688	51%	49%	75%	47%	South
City View	465	50%	50%	76%	51%	North
Francis J McGrath Elementary	226	49%	50%	72%	37%	Burncoat
Rice Square	467	49%	38%	75%	41%	North
University Park Campus School	229	47%	48%	91%	56%	South
South High Community	1,320	46%	53%	77%	45%	South
Grafton Street	378	46%	52%	77%	49%	North
Sullivan Middle	922	46%	51%	69%	39%	South
Chandler Magnet	483	46%	53%	84%	76%	Doherty
Burncoat Senior High	1,110	45%	53%	70%	43%	Burncoat
Chandler Elementary Community	446	45%	54%	85%	61%	Doherty
Worcester East Middle	735	45%	48%	77%	48%	North
Union Hill School	387	44%	53%	83%	64%	North
Woodland Academy	505	41%	58%	94%	74%	South
Goddard School/Science Technical	363	40%	60%	88%	62%	South
Claremont Academy	511	37%	63%	94%	71%	South

Source: Worcester Public Schools, Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education