



The Research Bureau

Bureau Brief—In-person 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.](#) The Research Bureau also did an analysis of hybrid learning opt-in rates in March, [which is available here.](#)

On May 3, 2021, Worcester Public Schools (WPS) will resume offering full in-person learning for all grades up to grade 8. This comes after a full academic year of remote learning, and after 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, WPS began offering a hybrid option that allowed some in-person learning that was combined with some remote classes.

Families can opt in to in-person learning or choose to remain with remote learning. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts had 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), but Worcester successfully applied for a K-8 waiver to push that start date to May 3. High school grades remain either hybrid or remote, although the Commonwealth has mandated a return to in-person learning for grades 9-12 by May 17, and no waiver has been announced for WPS.

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 as both the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the Worcester Public Schools district increasingly return to in-person learning.

Hybrid Opt-in Patterns

According to data released by WPS, out of 16,393 students enrolled in all pre-K through grade 8 schools and programs, **69 percent have been opted into in-person learning and 28 percent have been opted out and will remain remote**, with 3 percent failing to respond. This is an increase in classroom learning since March, when 54 percent of elementary school students and 52 percent of middle school students were opted into hybrid learning.

All WPS schools belong to one of four regional quadrants. **Doherty**, the westernmost quadrant, and **Burncoat**, the northernmost, **each saw 73 percent of their student bodies opted into hybrid learning.** **South**, the southernmost, **saw 67 percent opt for hybrid, while North** (the easternmost) **saw 65 percent opt for hybrid learning.**

Slight demographic divides also persist. In March, 62 percent of white students were opted into hybrid learning, compared to 45 percent of Hispanic students, 52 percent of Black Non-Hispanic students, and 46 percent of Asian students. For in-person opt-ins, **white students are now going back to classrooms at a 78 percent rate, compared to 75 percent of Black Non-Hispanic students and 62 percent of Asian**

students. Hispanic students of all races have a 67 percent in-person opt-in rate.

These demographic differences have an impact on the school level. **Schools where the student body is at least 40 percent white saw 78 percent of students opted into in-person learning, while schools where more than 40 percent of students are nonwhite opted in at a rate of 66 percent.** The pattern holds true for the Hispanic population—**schools where Hispanic students are less than 30 percent of enrollment had a 81 percent in-person opt-in rate, while schools where Hispanic students are at least 30 percent of the population had a 66 percent hybrid opt-in rate.**

A pattern also exists for schools with higher levels of “economically disadvantaged” students, those participating in one of a variety of state programs like Medicaid or SNAP. **Schools where less than 50 percent of students are economically disadvantaged have an in-person opt-in rate of 81 percent, while those where more than 50 percent of students are economically disadvantaged have a 66 percent rate.**

The following page contains a school-by-school accounting of opt-in rates, accurate as of 4/22/21.

Chart 1: Percent of Students Opted Into In-person Learning by School

School	Enrollment	In-person	Remote	Percent Nonwhite (of total student body)	Percent Hispanic (of total student body)	Percent Economically Disadvantaged (of total student body)	Quadrant
West Tatnuck	336	87%	11%	47%	21%	50%	Doherty
Flagg Street	338	86%	12%	27%	13%	35%	Doherty
Worcester Arts Magnet School	359	85%	14%	54%	21%	26%	Burncoat
Nelson Place	551	85%	14%	49%	19%	33%	Doherty
Tatnuck	384	80%	20%	57%	25%	50%	Doherty
May Street	278	79%	20%	58%	22%	48%	Doherty
Lake View	312	79%	21%	58%	23%	46%	North
Roosevelt	621	78%	21%	63%	30%	58%	North
Norrback Avenue	528	76%	24%	67%	31%	84%	Burncoat
Clark St Community	237	75%	22%	85%	55%	56%	Burncoat
Canterbury	299	74%	26%	81%	52%	84%	South
Heard Street	248	73%	19%	56%	27%	39%	South
Lincoln Street	234	73%	27%	85%	55%	62%	Burncoat
Wawecus Road School	128	73%	27%	71%	45%	54%	Burncoat
Thorndyke Road	354	72%	27%	60%	31%	79%	Burncoat
Columbus Park	366	72%	28%	75%	50%	50%	South
Goddard School/Science Technical	362	72%	28%	88%	62%	76%	South
Burncoat Street	257	71%	28%	76%	55%	85%	Burncoat
Forest Grove Middle	904	70%	29%	59%	35%	78%	Doherty
Union Hill School	385	70%	29%	83%	64%	70%	North
Elm Park Community	396	69%	31%	78%	59%	79%	Doherty
City View	462	69%	30%	76%	51%	65%	North
Gates Lane	529	69%	30%	73%	39%	65%	South
Burncoat Middle School	679	67%	26%	69%	42%	80%	Burncoat
Woodland Academy	508	66%	34%	94%	74%	84%	South
Quinsigamond	701	65%	34%	75%	47%	73%	South
Francis J McGrath Elementary	223	65%	35%	72%	37%	65%	Burncoat
Rice Square	462	65%	34%	75%	41%	67%	North
Sullivan Middle	919	65%	35%	69%	39%	59%	South
Chandler Magnet	489	64%	35%	84%	76%	80%	Citywide
Midland Street	202	63%	37%	46%	21%	83%	Doherty
Jacob Hiatt Magnet	383	62%	38%	88%	48%	64%	Doherty
Vernon Hill School	474	61%	25%	82%	51%	85%	South
Chandler Elementary Community	445	60%	38%	85%	61%	84%	Doherty
Grafton Street	385	60%	14%	77%	49%	48%	North
University Park Campus School	77	60%	31%	91%	56%	69%	South
Belmont Street Community	535	55%	45%	81%	51%	80%	North
Claremont Academy	196	52%	45%	94%	71%	75%	South
Worcester East Middle	730	52%	26%	77%	48%	78%	North

Enrollment and opt-in figures are for grades pre-K through 8, while student body figures are for the entire school. This is relevant for schools that also have high school grades, such as Claremont Academy. Source: Worcester Public Schools, Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education