



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,](#) and an analysis of in-person opt-in rates for grades K-8, [which is available here.](#)

On May 17, 2021, Worcester Public Schools (WPS) will resume offering full in-person learning for grades 9-12. This comes after a full academic year of remote learning, and after K-8 students had been given an option to switch to in-person learning starting May 3. Hybrid learning has been offered for all grades since March, but will transition into full in-person 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. Under state guidelines, high school grades had to be offered a return to five-day-a-week, in-person learning starting on May 17. As a result, most Worcester high school students have made such selection decisions, except those attending South High. Due to the impacts from that school's construction project, most South High students will remain either hybrid or remote until May 28th, and then shift to fully remote on June 1, except for high need students who will receive in-person learning at another facility.

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 for high school grades and who is staying virtual as both the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the Worcester Public Schools district increasingly return to in-person learning.

Opt-in Patterns

The data for this analysis was provided by WPS, and did not include a separate category for non-responses. Of the 7,207 WPS students enrolled in all high schools and high school grades, **43 percent have been opted into in-person learning and 57 percent have been opted out and will remain remote.** Of those students, 1,323 are affected by the construction limitations at South High, so if they were exempted from the analysis, **47 percent of eligible WPS high school students are opting for in-person learning and 53 percent are remaining remote.** For context, in March 51 percent of WPS high school students were opted into hybrid learning.

As was the case with hybrid opt-in decisions and in-person opt-in decisions for lower grade levels, there are demographic divides in who chooses to return to in-person learning. For in-person opt-ins, **white high school students are now going back to**

classrooms at a 55 percent rate, compared to 45 percent of Black Non-Hispanic students and 34 percent of Asian students. Hispanic students of all races have a 36 percent in-person opt-in rate.

On a school-by-school basis, **Worcester Technical High School** is the only high school where more than half of students will be going back to in-person learning—**60 percent were opted in.** Around **47 percent of Doherty High students, 44 percent of Burncoat High students and 40 percent of North High students were opted in to in-person learning.** Due to the construction limitations noted above, at South High only the high need students will be participating in five-day-a-week in-person learning, so had the lowest rate at **28 percent.**

The following page contains a school-by-school accounting of opt-in rates, accurate as of 5/12/21.

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
Worcester Technical High	1459	60%	40%	66%	38%	50%	Citywide
Doherty Memorial High	1324	47%	53%	62%	36%	49%	Doherty
Burncoat Senior High	1110	44%	56%	70%	43%	61%	Burncoat / Magnet
North High	1183	40%	60%	83%	53%	75%	North
University Park Campus School	152	35%	65%	91%	56%	70%	South
South High Community*	1323	28%	72%	77%	45%	67%	South
Claremont Academy	319	28%	72%	94%	71%	76%	South

Due to the construction limitations noted above, at South High only the high need students will be participating in five-day-a-week in-person learning.

Enrollment and opt-in figures are for grades 9-12 while student body figures are for the entire school. This is relevant for schools that also have elementary or middle school grades, such as Claremont Academy. Source: Worcester Public Schools, Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education