

Schools closed in virus hot spots as NYC battles flare-ups

October 6 2020



A sign posted on Oct. 2nd advises anyone entering Edward R. Murrow High School must go through a city health screening, Monday, Oct. 5, 2020, in the Midwood section of the Brooklyn borough of New York. The school is one of many in New York City that will close Tuesday after New York Gov Andrew Cuomo ordered schools in city neighborhoods with high coronavirus rates to shut down. (AP Photo/Kathy Willens)

Hundreds of New York City public and private schools were closed Tuesday in neighborhoods with flare-ups of coronavirus cases as city and state officials continued discussing the possibility of shuttering many businesses in those areas.

Gov. Andrew Cuomo ordered the closing of schools in nine Brooklyn and Queens ZIP codes on Monday. But he held off a decision on Mayor Bill de Blasio's proposal to close nonessential businesses in those areas, suggesting that the boundaries needed to be drawn differently to be effective.

"Once we have that done, then I don't have a problem with closing the essential businesses," the governor said Monday, arguing that closing schools was a higher priority.

De Blasio said Tuesday that the city and state were continuing to discuss the proposed business closings. He pressed for a quick answer, saying the city was ready to close the enterprises Wednesday but needed the state's approval.

"We are at a crucial moment in our fight against the coronavirus," de Blasio said at a virtual news briefing. "We have to bring everything we can to bear. We have to be tough about it."

He and Cuomo, both Democrats, have often been at odds over the pandemic response and previous issues.

The affected areas are largely Orthodox Jewish strongholds, and some community members have complained of being singled out for enforcement.



Public School 95 in the Gravesend section of Brooklyn is one of many schools in New York ordered to close due to a flare-up of coronavirus cases in the area, Monday, Oct. 5, 2020, in New York. New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo ordered schools in certain New York City neighborhoods closed within a day in an attempt to halt a flare-up of the coronavirus. The governor took his action a day after Mayor Bill de Blasio asked the state for permission to reinstate restrictions on businesses and schools in nine ZIP codes in Brooklyn and Queens where the virus was spreading more quickly. (AP Photo/Kathy Willens)

De Blasio said Sunday that about 100 public schools and 200 private schools would be shut down in the nine ZIP codes. The move came just days after the city's public schools opened for in-person learning.

The nine ZIP codes where schools were closed have accounted for more

than 20% of all new infections in the city over the past four weeks, though they represent just 7% of the population.

North of the city, the health commissioner in Orange County ordered school closures for at least two weeks in an Orthodox Jewish community in the Hudson Valley.

Dr. Irina Gelman ordered the closure of public and private schools serving the village of Kiryas Joel, also known as the Town of Palm Tree, where an average of nearly 28% of coronavirus cases have come back positive over the last three days. Statewide, the daily average has been around 1% in recent days.

Most Kiryas Joel children attend private schools. A spokesman for the village said schools there are already closed through Oct. 13 because of the Jewish holiday of Sukkot.

The superintendent of the Kiryas Joel public school district, which serves students with special needs, said it has strictly adhered to health screening and mask rules.

"There is no substitute for in-person instruction and therapy, and we look forward to getting back as soon as it's safe to do so," said the superintendent, Joel Petlin.

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Citation: Schools closed in virus hot spots as NYC battles flare-ups (2020, October 6) retrieved 30 April 2024 from

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