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Stuyvesant reopens, but students jittery

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Stuyvesant High reopened yesterday, its students and teachers filled with a grab bag of emotions.

Four weeks after being uprooted by the terrorist attacks at the nearby World Trade Center, students — and their parents — expressed continuing concerns about safety at the school.

"It's a mix — eagerness, a bit of fear and excitement about coming back," said student body President Jukay Hsu. "We missed our school, and lots of us were homesick."

Students were required to show their student IDs before even getting close to the building. Parents and other onlookers were kept away.

While parents had concentrated on air quality inside the school, new concerns emerged yesterday about the air quality outside, six blocks from Ground Zero, as dump trucks carrying debris rolled up adjacent West St.

"This is a construction site. We're walking through a construction site," said Rochelle Kalish, 47, of Windsor Terrace, Brooklyn, whose daughter is a freshman.

After the school was evacuated Sept. 11, Stuyvesant was turned into a temporary triage center for rescue efforts in lower Manhattan.

Until yesterday, students

crammed into Brooklyn Technical High School for shortened classes, while a million-dollar cleanup was done at Stuyvesant.

Battery of air tests

The air was tested by the Board of Education, the city, the federal government and privately by Stuyvesant's parent association.

"The tests show it's safe to be here," said Chancellor Harold Levy, who moved his office to the school for the week to show that he believes the reports.

Though the parent association agreed to the reopening on the condition that air quality be continually monitored, other parents questioned the decision.

"The construction workers have masks, gloves, and wash-down areas, but the kids don't," said Kathie McGinty, 50, of the West Village. She said she wanted her daughter to wear a mask to school, but that her daughter, a junior, objected.

Attendance yesterday was normal at Stuyvesant, with 160 absences out of 3,077 students, said Kevin Ortiz, a spokesman for the Board of Education.

Mark Shildkret, 15, a sophomore from Bayside, Queens, said he was happy to be back but wished he could turn back the clock and return to the way things used to be.

"I liked the way my normal life was. I want to go back to it," Shildkret said. "I was pretty happy."

Pupils relocated

Yesterday also marked a transition day for hundreds of elementary students from Public School 234, at Greenwich St. near Chambers St., which until recently served as a staging area for crews at Ground Zero.

The kids moved to the former St. Bernard's Catholic school on W. 13th St., closed since June. They could be there until the Christmas break, parents said.

Students from the school had been sharing space at PS 41 on W. 11th St.

"These kids will finally have some air," said Rene Dekker, whose 6-year-old son and 8-year-old daughter attend PS 234.

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