NYC 9/11 Public Portal Document

DAILY NEWS, THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 2001

Stuyvesant HS students

Tough return today for 9,000 students

By ALISON GENDAR
DAILY NEWS STAFF WRITER

Book bags, notebooks, clipboards, easels and compassion are needed as nearly 9,000 students who fled their schools near the World Trade Center return to class today.

For a majority of the 8,616 students evacuated from eight schools, back to class means back to classrooms they've never seen before — and without enough desks and books for them. Only one of the downtown schools, Murray Bergtraum High School on Pearl St., is reopening.

Art, music and science rooms, libraries and teachers lounges will double as elementary and middle school classrooms. Three high schools will have staggered shifts, with the displaced students starting later in the day. Many classes will shrink to 30 minutes.

"Whatever it is, we are going to make it work," said Anna Switzer, principal at Public School 234 on Chambers and Greenwich Sts., one of the eight evacuated schools serving as a staging area for rescue and recovery efforts.

Extra counselors, parent volunteers and teachers — many handing out ribbons and tiny American flags — will greet returning students.

Chancellor Harold Levy expected attendance to be low because many families who live downtown have not been allowed back into their homes.

Cramped classes

Even if some students stay away, space will be at a premium.

Switzer's 628 students will need clipboards to write on because there aren't enough desks at the school that will take them in, PS 41 on W. 11th St.

Parents at PS 3 on Hudson St., which will play host to 362 students from PS 89 on Warren St. and 161 students from PS 150 on Greenwich St., have collected everything from extra notebooks and food to easels for teachers working in rooms without chalkboards.

Although corporate donations have been rolling in, and the federal government has pledged $4 million for counseling and after-school services, it has been parents and longtime school benefactors who have worked to line up supplies.

Phyllis Frankfort, a founder of the High School for Economics and Finance on Trinity Place, got pledges from a half-dozen companies, including Citigroup and Timberland, for supplies ranging from markers to book bags.

Downtown parents set up school disaster funds for PS 150, 234 and 89 and Intermediate School 89.

After touring the disaster site Monday, U.S. Education Secretary Rod Paige said students' physical needs would be easier to fix than the psychological wounds from watching death and terror up close.

Although every student has been accounted for, hundreds may have lost family members. And then there are the memories.

Tamal Miah, 17, a senior at the High School for Economics, sees lingering images of flames and people tumbling from windows that wake him at night. He is eager to be reunited with his friends and teachers.

"I want to make sure they are okay," he said.

Who's going where

Students at the following downtown schools and one special-education program are to report today to the following schools:

- Stuyvesant High School to Brooklyn Technical High School, 29 Fort Greene Place, Fort Greene, Brooklyn; 11 a.m..
- High School for Leadership and Public Service to Fashion Industries High School, 225 W 24th St., Manhattan; 10:30 a.m.
- High School for Economics and Finance to Norman Thomas High School, 111 E. 33rd St., Manhattan; 1 p.m.
- Murry Bergtraum High School, 411 Pearl St., Manhattan, reopens at the regular time. No students relocated.
- Public School 234 to PS 41, 116 W. 11th St.; regular time.
- PS 89 to PS 3, 490 Hudson St., Manhattan; regular time.
- Intermediate School 89 to IS 70, 333 W. 17th St., Manhattan; regular time.
- PS 150 to PS 3, 490 Hudson St., Manhattan; regular time
- Special-education program P721M at Stuyvesant moved to P79M, 55 E. 120th St., Manhattan; regular time.



KRISTEN ARTZ

WELCOME WORKERS Principal Patrick Burke and volunteers make presents for students returning to High School for Economics and Finance on Trinity Place.

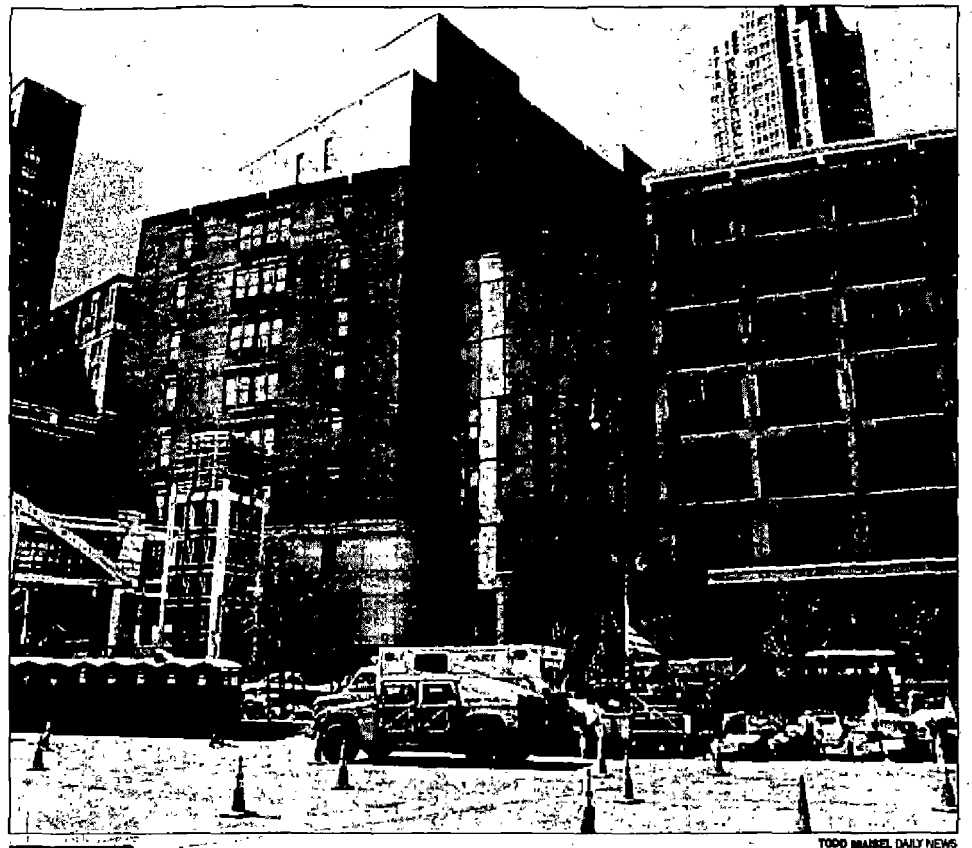
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heading to B'klyn Tech



TODD MAISEL DAILY NEWS

SHUT DOWN Stuyvesant High School on West and Chambers Sts. is being used for relief and rescue mission.

By MELISSA GRACE
DAILY NEWS STAFF WRITER

When Stuyvesant sophomore Priya Prasad arrives for class today for the first time since the twin towers collapsed, she'll come with seared images of terrified hordes racing from the collapsing inferno.

"I saw a building fall, there was dust and a lot of people running," said 14-year-old Priya, who was in Spanish class when the first tower came down. "I started crying."

Eugene Oh, a 16-year-old student at the elite high school, said he concocted a desperate plot with his friends to escape out a back exit after students were ordered to remain in the building.

Paralyzed with fear because Eugene couldn't find his younger brother Mitchell, the students never acted on their plan.

"I saw the second explosion. I saw a fireball," said Eugene, a senior. "I was so scared."

It's back to school today for Stuyvesant High School's 3,011 students, but it won't be in their gleaming building on Chambers St. They will be sharing space across the Hudson River with their 4,200 longtime academic rivals at Brooklyn Technical High School.

Staggered school days

After Stuyvesant parents complained about plans to allow overlapping classes, the Board of Education agreed to stagger the school day.

That means Tech students will start at 7:15 a.m. and finish by 1 p.m., when Stuyvesant students begin. They will finish at 6 p.m. Stuyvesant students were told to arrive at 11 a.m. Forty-minute classes will be reduced to 30 minutes.

Principal Stanley Teitel ordered his students out of the building after the first tower collapsed. He said he didn't move sooner because Secret Service officers had assured him that the towers couldn't fall. After the kids moved out, a contingent of federal officials and rescue workers poured in, turning the school into a triage center.

Stuyvesant students will remain in Fort Greene until emergency workers clear out, hopefully by Nov. 1. The two schools, along with Bronx Science, require exams for admission and are considered the jewels of the public school system.

Today, the Stuyvesant refugees will be greeted by Teitel and their teachers — and a team of about 20 mental health workers.

Before they hit the books, students and teachers will be offered counseling. Drop-in therapy sessions will continue for at least several weeks. Teachers also may choose to invite counselors into their classrooms.

"These kids are in shock," said Judy Moore, a clinical social worker whose daughter, Jessica, a Stuyvesant junior, saw people jumping from the towers.

Moore is working with the school's five guidance counselors to coordinate counseling sessions and recruiting colleagues to volunteer at the school.

Recovering from schock

Not only are the students traumatized, many, like Priya who lives in the Financial District, haven't been able to return to their homes. Their books and supplies are still in their lockers.

Some may have lost loved ones in the collapse.

"My first concern is what my students actually saw on Tuesday," Teitel said this week. "That is the top priority."

He said he's particularly concerned that students have had little or no counseling since they fled the school.

"I'm disturbed, I'm still shocked," said Peter Christodoulou, a senior. "It makes it harder that we are homeless from our school."

Nevertheless, the 17-year-old added, "All the students are very proud that our school is being put to good use."

Colleges get a lesson in recovery

By EMILY GEST
DAILY NEWS STAFF WRITER

Antonio Perez has a bird's-eye view of the rescue effort, but he'd rather be watching over his students.

Perez is president of the Borough of Manhattan Community College, which is only blocks away from Ground Zero and has been used as a command post by the National Guard and a rest station for rescue workers.

The campus was without electricity for nearly a week and is still without phones. With computerized records out of reach, college staff has been unable to contact students to see if any were injured by falling debris.

"This is going to be a tough return," Perez said.

Thousands of students at colleges in downtown Manhattan have been displaced as a result of last week's attack.

Of all of them, BMCC was hit the hardest.

As rescue workers shower and sleep in the gym, Perez uses his cell phone to find alternative space to replace the 45 classrooms destroyed when 7 World Trade Center partially collapsed on a college building at 30 West Broadway.

"The problem is we need to offer classes at the same time they were offered before," said Perez, who is aiming to reopen the school by Oct. 1.

So far, 12 trailers will serve as classrooms outside the Chambers St. campus, but Perez is negotiating with other colleges for use of their facilities.

At Pace University at the foot of the Brooklyn Bridge, about 1,000 students living in dorms downtown have had to move, said spokeswoman Mary Horgan. Classes will resume tomorrow. At New York Law School on Worth St., classes will resume Monday.

Classes at New York University started last Friday, but staff has scrambled to find housing for some 3,000 students living in dorms south of Houston St. About half have returned home, but 1,700 are homeless indefinitely and staying at two midtown hotels, said spokesman John Beckman.

Audrey Leigh, 24, a second-year law student, moved to one of the hotels last night.

"I have a roommate but I don't know who she is," Leigh said, clutching a green suitcase while waiting for a shuttle bus.

With so much going on, Leigh said she's skipped a few classes.

"I'm not going to sit there and listen to people talking about things so far from reality," she said. "It really stretches your limits moving from place to place. But you can't talk about it when other people are looking for lost loved ones. I feel shallow talking about it."

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