

NYC plans child care for 100,000 kids when schools partially reopen ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

NEW YORK — The city will offer child care for 100,000 kids who will be unable to attend school full time in the fall, Mayor Bill de Blasio said Thursday.

New York's public schools plan to offer a mix of in-person classes and remote learning when a new school year starts — with students going to school one to three days a week, in order to cut the number of people in buildings and prevent the spread of the coronavirus.

That's expected to create a major crunch for working parents with no one to watch their kids on the days they're not in school.

The mayor rolled out plans to expand city-sponsored child care programs so 100,000 children from preschool through eighth grade will have a place to go on their off days. There are 1.1 million students in the city's public school system, the largest in the nation.

"So many parents have also said they can't make it work if they don't get more child care," de Blasio said. "We've been trying to find every way to create new child care — and to build it from scratch, honestly, because we're having to create something that didn't exist before on this scale."

City officials are currently scouring for space that will include community centers and libraries converted into child care centers. Private landlords are also encouraged to pitch their space to the city for either school or child care.

"We've got a little under two months until school begins. We've got a lot to do, and nothing like this has ever been attempted on this timeframe," de Blasio said. "But we're going to find a way to do this, and hopefully much more."

Many details have yet to be announced, including how the city will decide which families get priority for the spots and how much it will cost.

The child care programs will be capped at fifteen students per room, in line with state social distancing rules, said city budget director Melanie Hartzog.

The programs will supervise children while they participate in online learning, and offer arts and recreation activities and possibly local field trips.

The city will provide money to pay for masks and other personal protective equipment. Once they hit 100,000 seats, they hope to expand the program.

"Our teams are on the ground dealing with not-for profits, libraries, business communities, business groups, individuals. We are everywhere throughout the city, and we will find space," said Lorraine Grillo, head of the School Construction Authority. "We're concentrating in all five boroughs."

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