

METAL DEFECTORS

City to ax scanners at some schools

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METAL DETECTORS — standard issue in many city schools — may be on their way out.

The city is moving to reduce the use of the detectors in some schools with the start of the next school year, Education Department officials and principals told the Daily News.

While roughly 300 public schools in 88 buildings use metal detectors to scan

students, the machines are a lightning rod for controversy over whether they create a tense, hostile environment.

Mayor de Blasio said Wednesday that the city is still investigating the issue, but school leaders and education officials, who asked to speak on the controversial subject anonymously, said many detectors could be pulled next September.

"They are working on a list of schools where they won't be used anymore," said one principal who requested anonymity because officials are not authorized to speak on the subject.

In July, the Mayor's Leadership Team on School Climate and Discipline called for the removal of the contraptions.

"By far the No. 1 consideration in this will be what keeps our kids safe," de Blasio said. "There are some schools that have had a changing situation where they've become safer and safer and where principals have asked for consideration to remove metal detectors."

Crime in Big Apple schools has been declining for years, but many educators, parents and law enforcement officials attribute the success to metal detectors, which are used to scan up to 90,000 students on any given day.

Critics say they're no longer needed and their use is unfairly aimed at schools with high numbers of black and Hispanic kids.

Statistics were not immediately available on how many students have been caught trying to smuggle in guns and knives.

"They're looking for schools with principals who want to get rid of them and places where there haven't been any incidents," said one education official. "Absolutely, they're going to do it."

Principals union VP Mark Cannizzaro said each school leader should have the last word on the use of scanners, while parents and students are divided on the issue.

"If someone tries to bring in a weapon, they can find it," said Samantha Fernandez, a ninth-grader at the Secondary School of Law in Brooklyn, where scanners are used.

But Sarah Way, 43, disagrees. Her daughter attends Park Slope Collegiate in Brooklyn, which shares a building with Samantha's school. "I think they should go," said Way. "It's a leftover from years ago."

With Erin Durkin

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MAYOR DE BLASIO

Officers find weapons every day

ICAN'T understand the logic. At a time when safety measures are being beefed up around the world, why is the mayor of the City of New York looking to lessen the use of devices, such as metal detectors, that protect a most vulnerable target — our public school students? School safety agents are entrusted with protecting these children, so why are we making it harder for them to do their job?

Every day, agents break up fights and confiscate weapons and drugs. That's the real world we live in.

Those who argue for the removal of metal detectors because they send the wrong message to students in communities of color need to read the headlines.

Shootings of youngsters are on

the rise in the streets and in their homes. We're just trying to keep them safe in schools. Why take the risk?

Passing through a metal detector on the way to class might pose an inconvenience and is a symbol of troubling times.

But when visitors to Chancellor Carmen Fariña or Mayor

de Blasio go to their respective offices, there are metal detectors. Shouldn't our students have the same protection? Gregory Floyd is the President of Teamsters Local 237, the union that represents school safety agents.



PRO
GREGORY FLOYD

Search routine is humiliating

SCHOOL SHOULD be a place where children are welcomed, encouraged and educated. Requiring over 90,000 students in New York City to pass through a metal detector, open their backpacks and sometimes submit to wand and pat-downs in order to go to school everyday sends those students the wrong message.

These practices erect a barrier which makes students feel unwelcomed. They introduce a climate of suspicion and hostility where the students feel degraded and resentful of both police who administer the daily humiliation and of the educators who let it happen.

Administrators and students often complain about loss of class time and academic performance due to delays

caused by lines at the metal detectors. And the vast majority of children subjected to these practices are black and Latino students, who are also disproportionately poor and vulnerable.

We all want schools to be safe. But research shows that metal detectors and street policing tactics that go with them do not improve school safety.

What's more, they are incompatible with the sort of nurturing and supportive environment that schools should work to cultivate.

A better way to promote safe schools is to focus on building trusting relationships between educators and students, so students feel comfortable seeking help when there's trouble.

Donna Lieberman is executive director of the New York Civil Liberties Union.



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