

City's Schools Open Again; Smooth and Hectic as Usual

By DENA KLEIMAN

On a sparkling day that must have seemed more conducive to stickball and hopscotch than a morning in school, 947,000 children returned to their classrooms yesterday for the official start of the 1979-80 school year.

For many it was a day of beginnings, for many a day of reunions — with the usual confusions.

About 1,000 pupils were stranded at street corners waiting for buses that never came, officials said, and there were reports of misplaced program cards, lost bus drivers and enrollment problems. But principals, parents and others reported that the opening of class went about as smoothly as could be expected.

"It has all the marks of a rather normal, rather hectic opening of school," said Susan Glass, speaking for the United Federation of Teachers.

Throughout the city's 1,000 elementary, junior high and high schools, students reported to class to meet their new teachers, greet old ones and receive program cards. But many of the teachers they expected to see had been "excessed" or transferred to other schools since last June. This made for a confusion of its own.

"I have a math teacher outside right now who was told he was being excessed from Boys High," said Dr. Jack Pollock, principal at Abraham Lincoln High School in Brooklyn. "They sent him here. Now they just called and said they want him back again."

Their were other cutbacks, too. At John Dewey High School in Brooklyn, for example, students learned that there would be no computer mathematics or advanced language courses and that independent studies for seniors had been greatly reduced.

Billie Dolin, speaking for Community School District 3 on Manhattan's Upper West Side, said that 85 teachers had been declared in excess in that district and that meetings had been scheduled for last night and tonight to protest local budget cuts amounting to \$1 million.

"Budget cuts don't become real until the children are back in school," said Barbara Hruska, research director of the United Parents Association.

The bus difficulties stemmed from last-minute contract cancellations, reassignment of routes and problems that some companies encountered with drivers or vehicles.

Eleven companies with 139 vehicles canceled contracts last week, Robert Terte, a spokesman for the Board of Education, said. These routes were reassigned, many to Varsity Transit Inc. Varsity, which for years had a monopoly on school-bus transportation in the city, lost three-quarters of its routes during competitive bidding either because it was underbid or was prevented from bidding during the early days of a wildcat strike by drivers last February.

In addition, about 800 pupils in Queens could not get to class yesterday because of a two-month-old strike by drivers of the Green Bus Company, according to Marvin R. Aaron, superintendent of District 27 in Queens. He said five schools were affected in Far Rockaway, Rockaway Park, Howard Beach, Woodhaven and Ozone Park.

Carol Brownell, speaking for the Board of Education, said that attendance figures were usually high on the first day of school but that it would not be clear until late October how many of the 947,000 students expected to attend the city's schools this year in fact did so. The second day — today — is when business and attendance usually gets back to normal.

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