

East High School has uneven attendance on first day

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First, the good news: 91 percent of sixth- through eighth-graders at the new East High School were in their seats when classes began Tuesday. In sixth grade alone, it was 94 percent.

The bad news: just 62 percent of ninth-graders attended, a mark that's below even the district-wide rate for ninth-graders on the first day of school and that illustrates the challenge the University of Rochester is facing at the school.

As in the rest of the Rochester School District, a distinction prevails at East between high school students who are on track to graduate and those with much ground to make up. For ninthgraders repeating the grade, attendance at East was 43 percent on Tuesday. For those taking it for the first time, it was 84 percent.

"This data is a reminder of the critical need to provide additional support to East's students struggling academically," school Superintendent Shaun Nelms said in a statement.

In fact, there is a program targeted in particular at ninth-grade repeaters. It is called Big Picture Learning, and the attendance rate among its 60 participants at East was 88 percent. Another 158 repeaters, however, are not taking part. Overall, attendance in grades 9-12 — the Upper School, in UR's parlance — was 74 percent. By comparison, 76 percent of students in grades 7-12 were in school the first day across the district.

District spokesman Chip Partner said Wednesday that districtwide attendance was much improved this week: 88 percent on Tuesday, up from 74 percent on the first day of school. For ninth-graders it was 82 percent.

Research indicates students need to be in class at least 95 percent of the time to learn what they're supposed to learn.

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