

# Kids complete school work at R-Centers

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TODAY NETWORK

Jonaizabeth Cruz Rosario, 10, adjusted her mask and prepared to record video from her laptop computer for one of her first assignments of the school year.

“I’ve got to tell something interesting about myself and what I want to learn this year,” she said. “An interesting thing about me is I don’t like pink or unicorns.”

That *is* an interesting thing — and, in an interesting year, the 10-year-old was completing her school work at an interesting place. Not Helen Montgomery School 50, where she’s enrolled, but rather a makeshift learning lab at the Trenton and Pamela Jackson Clinton-Baden R-Center on North Clinton Avenue.

There are nine such sites in city-run R-Centers throughout Rochester. The goal is to provide a safe place for children to do their online coursework, eat meals and get some exercise, just as they normally would at school.

Attendance is low so far — there were about 20 children Thursday morning at the Jackson R-Center, one of the largest sites — but growing each week, said City Commissioner of Youth and Recreation Services Daniele Lyman-Torres.

Children in the city are less likely to have reliable internet at home, even as the district has distributed thousands of wireless hotspots and computers. Access to food, too, is a pressing concern.

Lyman-Torres said the learning labs build on the existing, expansive relationship between RCSD and the city.

That relationship has improved since the arrival of Superintendent Lesli Myers- Small, she said. Schools and R-Centers are making sure that their literacy efforts align, for instance, and that children are able to use the same computer programs wherever they are.

“We work with the school district in tandem all the time,” Lyman-Torres said. “This is an opportunity to work better together than we have in the recent past.”

At the R-Centers as at school, many of the children were most excited about the extracurricular activities.

Christian Owens, 9, was working on an assignment about citizenship — you have to be 18 to vote, he reported dolefully — but was more excited about getting to play in the afternoon. The previous day he had played table tennis and billiards.

“It’s kind of hard to stare at a screen for six hours a day,” Owens said. “Thank God we get a break.”

he said. “It’s a challenge, but it’s rewarding and I can still be of use. And the learning continues.”

Contact staff writer Justin Murphy at [jmurphy7@gannett.com](mailto:jmurphy7@gannett.com). This coverage is only possible with support from our readers. Sign up today for a digital subscription.



**Christian Owens, left, and Jonaizabeth Cruz Rosario do their school work at the Trenton and Pamela Jackson Clinton-Baden R Center while Rochester City School District paraprofessional Johnhenr y Campbell supervises. JUSTIN MURPHY/ ROCHESTER DEMOCRAT AND CHRONICLE**

“Kids are starting to realize that staying home all day to do their learning isn’t the best,” she said.

### **The learning continues**

Rochester is the only school district in Monroe County to begin the year fully remote, meaning it has an additional need for spaces for children to learn during the day while their parents are at work.

The learning labs themselves are a no-frills setting, with computers around the perimeter and a conference table in the middle. A large box fan blasted cool air from an open door.

Johnhenry Campbell, a paraprofessional in the Rochester City School District, passed out oranges and milk cartons and reminded the children to keep their masks on their noses.

Campbell usually works as a one-to-one special education aide but said he’s making the best of his new assignment.

“All these students come from different schools, but here they’re classmates for all intents and purposes,”

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