

# **RCSO opens to wave of in-person learners**

First group of returning students begins classes

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Rochester Democrat and Chronicle USA TODAY NETWORK

The first yellow bus pulled up to Edison Career and Technology High School at 7:26 a.m. and discharged a pair of students, huddled against the cold and eager to get into the building.

It was a typical scene for an early Tuesday morning in January — except that the students, and the staff who greeted them, seemed to have a bit of a bounce in their step. For good reason: for the first time in 298 days, they were going to school.

About 325 Rochester City School District children returned to buildings across the city on Tuesday, the first wave of a districtwide return to partial in-person learning. They were students in certain specialized programs.

The 80 students returning to Edison are studying for a New York State Alternate Assessment diploma. Some students from East and Franklin high schools and the North STAR program are there as well, Principal Jacob Scott said.



**In school hybrid learning starts Tuesday as students wait to get through security after they arrive for classes at Edison Career and Technology High School on Colfax Street in Rochester on Tuesday. The first half of the year was restricted to remote learning due to COVID-19.**

PHOTOS BY TINA MACINTYRE-YEE/ROCHESTER DEMOCRAT AND CHRONICLE



**Each room at Edison Career and Technology High School is equipped with cleaning supplies and masks.**



**This is an example of how rooms at Edison Career and Technology High School are set up for students.**

They made for an unusually sparse crowd at Edison, which normally is the largest school in Monroe County with 1,800 students.

Nonetheless, Scott said: “You’ve got to have a level of excitement and energy.”

“It’s a different feeling to see someone in person rather than on camera,” he continued. “Many of our students unfortunately were struggling in a remote setting. Having them come in person is just so important.”

Rochester was the second-to-last district in New York to allow students in buildings; only Buffalo remains, though it too will reopen for some students in February.

The reopening comes as the COVID- 19 infection rate has reached an alltime high. Schools elsewhere have demonstrated an ability to prevent transmission of the virus in their buildings, though several have needed to close temporarily due to community outbreaks.

That has not satisfied all Rochester teachers and staff. A majority of teachers said in the fall that they wanted to stay with remote learning until at least late January, and nearly 600 signed a petition asking Superintendent Lesli Myers-Small to delay reopening.

“I’m very, very anxious,” an Edison Tech teacher said Tuesday morning as she entered the building. She declined to give her name. “It’s been a lot of sleepless nights.”

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**Students arrive in small waves at Edison Career and Technology High School as in-school hybrid learning starts Tuesday.** TINA MACINTYRE-YEE/ROCHESTER DEMOCRAT AND CHRONICLE

Like other districts, RCSD has instituted a series of health checks, cleaning protocols and distancing rules in its buildings. Students at Edison lined up to have their temperatures just inside the front doors; mask-wearing, at least first thing in the morning, was uniform.

“I’m very confident in what’s going on,” Scott said, “and we’ll just take it day by day and try to make it better.”

All elementary school students in RCSD will have the opportunity to resume hybrid learning Feb. 8. The district is still working out a plan to bring secondary students back several weeks after that.



**Students start to arrive at Edison Career and Technology High School about 7:15 a.m. Tuesday as hybrid learning started.**