

Dec. 10, 2021

Dear Huguenot Academy Families:

The recent announcement regarding Huguenot Academy and its impending move to Monroe College has spurred community conversation. The City School District of New Rochelle continues to look forward to the completion of renovations to the Monroe College space, and hopes to accommodate students, faculty, and staff on a full-time basis very soon. However, community conversation also has included misinformation. The below frequently asked questions and answers are provided to offer our community a comprehensive update.

What is Huguenot Academy?

Huguenot Academy is a program within New Rochelle High School. It offers a variety of instructional approaches, small classes, and personalized attention and support. Its nurturing environment provides routes to academic success, experiences that advance personal development, and a sense of belonging. Students opt in to attend Huguenot Academy.

Why is Huguenot Academy moving to Monroe College from its previous location at New Rochelle High School?

The relocation of the Academy to Monroe College, at 140 Huguenot St., will provide more suitable, spacious accommodations for students, faculty, and staff. The space, with 16,500 square feet, was selected for its location, accessibility, and amenities, as well as the potential for Huguenot Academy's enrollment to grow from its current community of approximately 65 students. Areas will include space for core classes, physical education, and study halls, as well as a multipurpose room. In addition, the relocation will open up partnership opportunities with Monroe College, including the potential for dual enrollment and earning college credits. In addition, the downtown site's proximity to businesses and public transportation should be advantageous to students seeking part-time jobs.

When will students be educated in this Monroe College space every day?

The Monroe College space is being renovated to comply with health, quality, and safety protocols required by the New York State Education Department. The Department will issue a Certificate of Occupancy upon completion of the work, when the updated space meets standards required for public-school students. Contractors are finalizing plans and the process for getting building permits has begun. We do not have a timeline for completion of the project and will provide that update as soon as we know.

How are Huguenot Academy students now being educated?

Students learn remotely Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, following the eight-period remote-learning schedule, including the Brain Break. On Tuesdays and Thursdays, Huguenot Academy meets at the New Rochelle Public Library from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Students receive instruction, academic support, assistance, socialization, and can take advantage of library resources. Students collaboratively work with each other and their teachers in this education-oriented setting. Grade-level sessions are rotated through the days so teachers have the opportunity to provide whole-group instruction. While Huguenot Academy's home base is the teen room in the library (multiple doors are always open), Huguenot Academy utilizes the majority of the library's second floor, with teachers spread out across the open space offering individual and small-group support throughout the day. There are no "classrooms."

Students check in and out with a security guard stationed across from the main desk at the library, between the entrances. A second security guard walks the second floor to ensure students are safe and behaving appropriately in this shared space. The library also has its own security staff members at multiple locations, as well as officers who walk the library, ensuring all guests follow library guidelines.

Including the security staff, there are 17 district-employed adults supervising students (about 38 have attended each day so far). Many of the Huguenot staff at the library are seeing students' faces, albeit masked, for the first time.

Students are offered lunch, provided by the school district's Food Services department, between 12:15 and 1:15 p.m. in the downstairs meeting room. To access this room, they leave the second floor, pass the security guard and enter the room, where our custodian, (an 18th district employee) assists with lunch distribution, supervision, and cleanup.

Students are required to have staff sign off on their work being up to date for each class before they are permitted to call their parents for permission to leave early. Once teachers have signed off and communication from parents has been received, students will be permitted to leave according to parent instructions.

Also during library sessions, students and teachers have reviewed their first marking-period grades, graduation requirements and standing, and have begun the process of planning for lives, education, and careers after graduation. Overall, Huguenot Academy courses are aligned with courses taken by New Rochelle High School students on the main Clove Road campus, but Huguenot's team also provides additional support for its students. In addition, Huguenot Academy students are eligible to participate in athletics and extracurricular clubs with their peers at the main campus.

Huguenot Academy also provides enrichment activities. In late November, students attended a team-building program called Boundless Adventures, on the campus of the State University of New York at Purchase. Students worked together to encourage and support one another through 10 aerial courses in the park. Many impressed themselves by accomplishing feats throughout the day's adventure.

Huguenot Academy will continue to create opportunities for students to build both interpersonal and intrapersonal skills as they prepare for a life beyond high school. The faculty continuously develops strategies and plans experiences to support building connections and relationships.

Will Huguenot Academy students at Monroe College have access to fresh air and sunlight during the school day?

The health, safety, and well-being of the Huguenot Academy students and staff are paramount. Students will have access to Monroe's physical education facility at its arena, a short walk away. Students will be escorted by their teacher and a security team to that location for that period. Additionally, a general permission slip was sent home. This enables staff to take students on neighborhood walks to visit local establishments. All outings are supervised by adults, and security is provided. In addition, district officials, in partnership with Monroe College's administration, are exploring the viability of installing full-spectrum lights in all classrooms. These bulbs simulate sun exposure, increasing the body's production of Vitamin D, which helps increase energy and provides numerous other benefits. Such attributes are vital during winter's reduced period of sunlight each day.

How will the City School District of New Rochelle ensure proper ventilation in the Monroe College space?

Upgrades at the Monroe College facility are now underway, which is why students, faculty, and staff are not yet attending class there at this point. The work, which started with a comprehensive inspection, is focusing on safety, health, and ensuring pandemic-appropriate levels of ventilation and fresh air. The heating, ventilation, and air conditioning system for the space will be improved to match safety and code requirements. This work will include new ducts, and a Dielectric Barrier Discharge Bipolar Ionization Air Purification System, now used in all school district buildings, will be installed. All project plans will be reviewed by school district facilities experts, Monroe College, and the City of New Rochelle. After all work is completed, the system will be tested and balanced by the school district's engineer to ensure proper operation. After that testing is successful, students, faculty, and staff will be able to occupy the space. In addition, other repairs and upgrades are being performed. These include ensuring appropriate accommodations required by the Americans With Disabilities Act.

How was the Monroe College location chosen?

Superintendent Jonathan Raymond, realizing the urgency of finding a home for Huguenot Academy after flooding caused New Rochelle High School to open this school year with remote learning, embarked on a search. He visited and evaluated numerous locations. In consultation with school district administrative leaders, he determined that Monroe College offered the most optimum environment for Huguenot Academy.

What transportation services are available to the Huguenot Academy community?

Bee-Line buses serve the Monroe College area, and their timing aligns with the opening and dismissal of school each day. They include Route 45, which stops at the intersection of North Avenue and Anderson Street, close to Monroe

College. In addition, the school district is providing after-school van transportation from Monroe College back to the New Rochelle High School campus to support club activities and athletics. We are checking with students to see if after-school transportation is needed from the New Rochelle Public Library to New Rochelle High School. Bee-Line Route 45 arrives at Main Street and Church Street at 8:48 a.m., convenient for the 9 a.m. start time for Huguenot students going to the New Rochelle Public Library. BOCES students, as of Nov. 30, 2021, are being provided transportation to and from the New Rochelle Public Library and New Rochelle High School, just as if those students were attending New Rochelle High School's main campus. For more information about Bee-Line routes and schedules, visit Westchestergov.com or call (914) 813-7777.

Could Huguenot students return to the main New Rochelle High School campus?

All Huguenot students have opted in to attend the Academy, and are welcome to transition back to New Rochelle High School's main campus at any time.

How is the college-application process and progress toward graduation being nurtured for Huguenot Academy's seniors?

Huguenot Academy provides students with substantial wraparound support, a vital component of our program. The newest Huguenot Academy team member is Marcus Siotkas, a guidance counselor. With 16 years of school counseling experience, he brings a wealth of knowledge and understanding of both graduation requirements and strategies, as well as post-secondary planning. In addition, the Academy is served by a full-time social worker and a full-time school psychologist. Library sessions last week included student meetings with Huguenot Academy's support team: Director Andrea Schwach, Mr. Siotkas, social worker Angelica Guel, and psychologist Brittany Hastings. Seniors also received assistance in completing the Common Application for colleges to ensure applications are filed before the December holiday break. We continue these senior meetings this week.

What protocols have been established regarding emergency evacuations or relocations from the Monroe College and New Rochelle Public Library spaces?

We are reviewing evacuation and relocation location plans, and options close to Monroe College, and will notify students, families, faculty, and staff when they are final. Huguenot Academy will follow New Rochelle Public Library parameters for evacuation and relocation, and take every step to safeguard our participants at the library as needed.

We will continue to keep you apprised of ongoing progress and opportunities, and we look forward to welcoming you to your new education space soon.

Sincerely,

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