

## City schools open with optimism and some glitches

Enrollment in the district is down by almost 2,000 students.

By Steve Giegerich  
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It didn't take long for Antoinette Oden to realize that Monday signaled the beginning of the end.

"I was getting ready for school this morning and I realized, 'Wow, I'm almost done,' and I'll pretty much be on my own by the end of this year," said Oden, a senior at the Construction Careers Center, 1224 Gratten Avenue.

Before she can move from high school to college and a planned career as an electrical engineer, however, Oden must complete enrollment at the charter school sponsored by the St. Louis Public Schools and the Associated General Contractors of St. Louis.

The first step down that road for Oden arrived early Monday. Oden and an estimated 30,000 students went back to class in 91 buildings across the city. The

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## Metro



First-year Principal Gina Washington greets seniors Stephanie Cheels (left) and Antoinette Oden at lunch on the first day of school at the Construction Careers Center in St. Louis. Washington had been a vice principal and a history teacher. (By Richard March Post-Dispatch)

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## It's back to school in St. Louis Public Schools

headed to an appointed board.

This year's opening day was not without glitches. Parents complained that buses on some

routes ran late or not at all. Meanwhile, seniors at Beaubien High School learned that an unfulfilled foreign language teaching job could result in French being offered at night.

Resumont Principal Travis Brown said the school was working to recruit a new French teacher.

Students were informed of problems with finding a teacher during registration in July, Brown added.

District officials did not release attendance figures this year. Traditionally, the city schools have struggled to get children to school the first few days each year. Deputy Superintendent

John Martin said preliminary reports received by the district indicated that some buses were light on riders Monday.

At the Construction Careers Center school, attendance didn't seem to be a problem — 435 students, up from 319 last year, prepared to get down to business Monday. New in its seventh year, the high school integrates students with specialized learning in 31 trades such as plumbing, masonry, electrical

engineering and carpentry. For Ashley Hogan, the "Blueprint Reading and Estimating" class taught by Egin Carnes is an opportunity to examine a world she has long found fascinating. Most people talk electric appliances for granted. Not Hogan.

"I want to know how they

work," said the senior, who hopes the center's lessons will lead to a career in engineering or electrical engineering.

Sophomore Kaven Davis spent part of her first day of classes studying the function of another device.

In his introduction to "Construction Pathways," teacher Duane McGowan turned the focus on the proper wear and fit of a hard hat.

When Davis's pony-tail presented an obstacle, McGowan stepped in with a helpful tip: "Tuck your hair up," he suggested.

Davis flipped her pony-tail atop her head and, just like that, busied in the first lesson learned of her new school year.

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