

Eastchester Eagle

EASTCHESTER
UNION FREE SCHOOL DISTRICT
SOARING TO EXCELLENCE

FALL 2019

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE EASTCHESTER UNION FREE SCHOOL DISTRICT

Middle School Classroom Libraries



From left to right: Sixth-graders: Jackson Rose, Jenna Rivera, Austin Reilly, Charlie Romano, Gavyn Gonzalez, Nathaniel Lewis; Teacher: Mary Kate Martucci

The Eastchester School District supports the goal to instill a love of reading and increase the proficiency of all its students with the addition of new classroom libraries in Eastchester Middle School.

This school year, every English classroom is equipped with an assortment of books.

“We want books in students’ hands. It is all about access,” said K-12 Supervisor of Humanities Susan Chester. “Research shows that if you put books where the students are, in addition to having a well-stocked central library, reading volume and time spent reading independently increase.”

The concept of a classroom library generally is considered a staple in elementary schools. The EUFSD seeks to expand that and allows EMS students to sign out books from their classroom libraries and take them home. The District also equipped study halls with books.

“I like that there is a large variety of books,” said student Jenna Rivera. She said the class library in Mary Kate Martucci’s sixth-grade class contains fiction, historical fiction and nonfiction books.

Her classmate Gavyn Gonzalez enjoys reading series and sees the connection between classroom libraries and the school facility. “If you read a book and the next one isn’t here, you can go to the library.”

Dear Eastchester Community,

What a terrific start to the school year it has been! Diving deeply into the daily interactions of the schools is one of the most important and gratifying roles of a superintendent, and I have enjoyed every minute getting to know and appreciate all of the wonderful people and experiences happening in our schools every day.

Here in Eastchester, ‘Soaring to Excellence’ is more than a tagline – it’s a commitment I see exemplified every day. Whether it’s a team of educators and assistants strategizing how to better meet the needs of students, a team of maintenance technicians and custodians improving our buildings, or a team of PTA volunteers providing extra levels of support for our schools, the cadence throughout the District is one that marches steadily toward ever increasing levels of excellence. As we now make the turn toward the holiday season, I wish to express my deep gratitude for all of the staff members and volunteers who take enormous pride in making this school district one of the best anywhere, along with our generous taxpayers who make our work possible.

As the school year progresses, we will be engaging the broader community in discussions about how we can soar to new levels of excellence in two specific areas. This November, we started working with a community Advisory Committee to explore enhancements to building safety and security. Then, in January, we will begin engaging our community in a strategic planning discussion that will map out the steps we need to take in the coming years to equip our students with the skills they will need to thrive in a world of incredibly rapid change.

These are exciting times, and I’m thankful to be here with you in Eastchester, as we seek together to soar to new heights of excellence! I welcome your thoughts and input at any time. My email is rglass@eufsdk12.org, you can follow me on Twitter @glasr333, or perhaps I’ll see you at one of our Coffee and Conversation events.

Yours in partnership,
Rob Glass, Superintendent

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Middle School Classroom Libraries

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Chester also commented, “A classroom library is meant as a complement to the regular school library, not to replace it.”

She collaborated with Eleanor Schuster, the Middle School Librarian, to order the appropriate books for the middle school students. Schuster also partnered with a Japanese bookstore to serve all children.

“The new classroom collections further enrich the relationship of teachers, students, and the librarians,” said Schuster. “Books are also readily available in the school library and a consultation with the librarian can help students find books they may not have thought about on their own.”

The classroom libraries emerged after Eastchester

secured approximately \$100,000 in grants and District funding to create the classroom libraries.

To increase access, teachers strategically placed nonfiction books in the main office and guidance office where students congregate. These books are meant to be “quick reads” similar to reading material found in a waiting room. Themes could range from sports to animals, topics tweens find engaging.

“Not everything a child reads must be challenging or serious. Reading should be engaging and an alternative to time spent looking at a screen.” Chester continued, “We’re hoping to generate excitement about reading, as well as to spark and support a lifelong reading habit.”

Italian Heritage and Culture Month

The Eastchester High School Italian Club celebrated Italian Heritage and Culture

and awarded students from Eastchester and the surrounding areas with certificates and scholarships for their commitment to learning the Italian language and culture.

On Oct. 21, students and their families attended the ceremony held in the auditorium where members of the Italian American Club sang the Italian National Anthem and the Star Spangled Banner to commence the evening.

This year’s ceremony recognized Matera. The region is located in the Eastern section of Italy and features prehistoric cave dwellings that most recently have been transformed into hotels and restaurants as part of a resurgence of the area.

The following Eastchester students received certificates for their achievements: eighth-grader Ben Wien, ninth-grader Melina Valvano, tenth-grader Jessica Fronda, eleventh-grader John Ferrara, twelfth-grader Sydney Gallo.

Westchester County Executive George Latimer also presented a proclamation to Eastchester High School that recognized its commitment to Italian culture and language. Westchester County District Attorney Anthony Scarpino presented awards to the students with members of the Italian American Community.

Special guests included Tony Amata, President of the Antonio Meucci Lodge #213, Professor Lucrezia Lindia, President of the Societa Onoraria Italica, Joseph Sciamè, President/Chair Italian Heritage and Culture Committee of New York, Professor Carlo Sciafani, Chairperson of Westchester Italian Heritage and Culture Month Committee.

Thank you to the benefactors who presented scholarships to the students: Mr. Carmine International Hair Salon, Mr. John DeCicco Sr. and Sons and The Ace Endico Scholarships.



In June the Anthony “T.J.” Morra Music Memorial Scholarship was awarded to senior Christina Mariani. Congratulations!



Dear Eastchester Community,

I am thrilled to welcome all of Eastchester's students and their families back to a new school year and introduce myself as your School Board president. As a lifelong educator, I am committed to working collaboratively with the community, the Board, and the Superintendent's team to ensure all students have access to a quality, nurturing educational experience. The elementary and secondary years are a critical growth period. We do best by our children when the schools and community join forces, listen to one another, disagree openly and respectfully, and build the District's future on a foundation of trust and transparency.

We have begun an exciting journey with our new Superintendent, Dr. Robert Glass, who has been working closely with the Board of Education, the PTAs, community leaders and organizations, and District staff and administrators to launch his tenure in Eastchester. We're off to a running start! Soon, we will begin a strategic planning process that will engage a cross section of community members in honest discussion about who we are as a District and where we should be headed. The result of this yearlong process will be a plan that clearly outlines our mission, goals, and priorities for the next three to five years. The strategic plan will not only facilitate open and ongoing discussion between stakeholders; it will also guide school budget and other decisions, holding the District accountable.

In addition, I am excited to launch a new series at our monthly Board meetings that brings in students, along with their teachers and mentors, to talk about their experiences in Eastchester School District as learners, explorers, athletes, artists, and servants of the community. We invite everyone to come out and hear our students' presentations.

It is my honor to serve as your School Board president and to support the continued growth and excellence of Eastchester Schools. Please check out a Board meeting this year, introduce yourself, and reach out to me any time. As a teacher, I value listening and I want to hear from you. Thank you for your faith in the School Board.

Sincerely,
Dr. Cheryl C. Smith, *President*
Board of Education

School Safety Officer Connects With Students

The Eastchester School District renewed its commitment to establish a safe and positive environment with the creation of a School Resource Officer located at Eastchester Middle and High School.

Police Officer Stephen DiLegge starts each day in front of Eastchester High School where he greets students and faculty. As the District's new SRO, Officer DiLegge monitors the overall safety of the school buildings and grounds, acts as a resource to administrators, and most importantly, builds relationships with students and families.

"The interaction is paramount," said Officer DiLegge who grew up in Eastchester and attended the public schools. He joined the department nearly ten years ago and during a recent interview, Officer DiLegge said he always had the desire to focus his career on community relations. "That is what it is all about – the involvement with the entire community to add a level of comfort and communication."

Voters approved the 2019-2020 School Budget which allowed for the creation of an SRO position. Officer DiLegge served as a DARE Officer at Greenvale for the past two years which provides him an advantage in his new role. Officer DiLegge said he already knew a majority of the students. "They are comfortable approaching me and I want that to continue. An SRO makes positive impacts on young people who never get to interact with officers." Officer DiLegge is certified in DARE and by the NYS Juvenile Officers Association.

Eastchester Police Lieutenant Jeffrey Hunter noted the reestablishment of an SRO Program builds on the current positive relationship the department maintains with the District.

"We truly believe that aside from the security benefits that a well-trained police officer brings to a school campus, the primary focus should continue to be on the building of relationships and strengthening the lines of communication between law enforcement and the student and staff populations. Having Officer DiLegge in the buildings, interacting with students and staff on a daily basis, significantly improves our chances of attaining our collective goals," said Lt. Hunter.

A 2018 report by the National Center for Education Statistics, a part of the U.S Department of Education, found that 42 percent of public schools had at least one SRO present at least one day a week during the 2015-2016 academic year.



Meet Jerrod Blair – Supervisor of STEM, K-12

STEM Supervisor Jerrod Blair applies the enthusiasm and excitement he sustained in the classroom and spreads it to teachers and students across the Eastchester School District.

“I want to open doors for students with 21st Century applications of STEM, specifically, robotics and coding. The earlier all students are exposed to these innovative topics, the more their comfort level will travel with them, and they will be less intimidated. As a result, access to science, technology, engineering, and mathematics will be more equitable.”

“First and foremost, I am building relationships,” said Blair. “Teachers, students and parents are becoming more comfortable with knowing who I am and what my role encompasses. I have spoken to first-grade teachers at Waverly and the AP Calculus, AP Chemistry and College Physics teachers at Eastchester High School.”

Blair also oversees the curriculum development surrounding the newly adopted New York State Science Learning Standards and the Next Generation Math Standards. One of Blair’s goals is to develop, enhance, and implement the concept of vertical curriculum alignment, where teachers on each grade level build upon the academic experiences of each year.

He taught in the Harrison Central School District for 15 years, first as a seventh-grade science teacher and then as an AP Chemistry, Regents Chemistry and Regents Living Environment instructor at Harrison High School.

Blair accepted several teacher leadership opportunities in Harrison as part of its mentoring program, including serving on the technology committee, teaching a summer professional development course and participating in several study groups on current topics in education such as literacy across the content areas and flexible learning spaces.

Blair most recently completed a Professional Diploma in Educational Leadership at Manhattanville College. He is currently a candidate in Manhattanville College’s Doctoral Program in Educational Leadership with an anticipated graduation in 2020. He earned a Master of Education in Science Education 7-12 and a Bachelor of Arts in Biological Sciences from the State University of New York at Buffalo.

Blair assumed this newly created position at the end of August and when he’s not meeting with teachers or involved in his studies, Blair enjoys traveling and taking cruises with his family and friends.



Meet Kristen Shearer – Supervisor of Guidance, K-12

When you step into Kristen Shearer’s office at Eastchester High School, you immediately recognize her dedication to her staff and students.

Shearer outlined the Comprehensive Guidance Plan for the District on a whiteboard and its heading clearly states the mission of the department: “School Counselors help ALL students in the areas of academic achievement, career & college readiness and social/emotional development.” The board embodies objectives, visions and practical steps to achieve those ends.

She assumed the newly created position in mid-August and her focus remains on the whole child. “The goal is to build a program that ensures students acquire the skills needed to be successful in school and life. When a student crosses the stage at graduation, he or she should represent the best person they can be.”

As the Supervisor of Guidance, Shearer oversees the implementation of the new state regulations for guidance and guidance programs.

Shearer brings a wealth of experience to the Eastchester School District. She previously worked at the Schenectady City School District as the Assistant Director for Pupil Personnel Services.

She also spent 18 years as the Director of Guidance and School Counselor at the Schenectady Central School District. Shearer earned a Bachelor of Arts in Communication and Business, a Master of Science in Education and a Certificate of Advanced Study in School Counseling from the State University of New York at Oneonta.

She received a Certificate of Advanced Study in Educational Leadership from the State University of New York College at Cortland and holds certification in School District Leadership and as a K-12 School Counselor.

Shearer is on the executive board of the New York State School Counselor Association and serves on the NYS Education Department Advisory Committee for School Counselors, Pupil Personnel Services and Mental Health. In her free time she enjoys traveling with her husband and adult children.





Students reinforced their math skills while playing games with their families during Waverly Math night.

Waverly Math Night

Children lined up dominoes, rolled dice and counted at the Waverly Family Math Night.

On Oct. 10, the kindergarten and first-graders played games like Pumpkin Bump, Ten Frames and Domino Parking Lot.

“Doing math is good for your brain,” said first-grader Olivia Calo.

Families rotated from room-to-room and played games that demonstrated addition and subtraction skills. These skills form a foundation for more complex and abstract math.

“Math Night demonstrates that the content and skills that students are learning in the classroom can be practiced and built on from home,” said Supervisor of STEM, K-12 Jerrod Blair.

Parents can utilize ordinary game pieces and everyday items at home to play similar games.

Spirit Week

Eastchester High School students exhibited the pride of Eagle Nation during Spirit Week!

During the week of October 7, students participated in theme days and celebrated at the annual Pep Rally. The events culminated with Homecoming on Oct. 12.



Photo Credit: Lifetouch

Internet Safety - Words Matter

Retired NYC Police Detective Thomas Grimes challenged Eastchester Middle School students to make a choice and decide whether they would utilize the internet in a positive or negative way.

“You have the power to help people or to hurt people,” said Det. Grimes as he addressed students during an assembly on Oct. 10.

Det. Grimes formed NY Finest Speakers, a company that seeks to protect and educate young people and their parents about online safety and drug awareness.

He explained to the students that the words privacy, respect, compassion, decency and civility should regulate all their online activities.

“If you understand these words and apply them to what you do online, you understand the power to be heard worldwide,” said Det. Grimes.

He showed the students pictures of real people who used the internet to help police capture criminals or reunite families with lost children. He also shared photos of young people, just like themselves, who made poor choices that often led to tragic consequences.

Students said the presentation reaffirmed some of the things that they already knew but it also provided them with new and useful information.

Eighth-grader Julia Naclerio said she learned about the power of a text. “You should be aware and not ignore what is written.”



From left to right: Det. Thomas Grimes, Eastchester Assistant Principal Madeline LoBue, Eastchester Middle School Principal Josh Elder

Eastchester's New Supervisor of Transportation

The Eastchester School District transports 2,500 students to and from school every day. The District created a new position, Supervisor of Transportation, to oversee the many facets of the department.

"The safety of our students governs all the decisions we make in the Transportation Department. It is imperative that we provide a reliable and equitable service to all our families," said Nicole Dolce who took on the role last March. As part of her duties, Dolce oversees bus contracts with First Student and Royal Coach.

She wasted no time learning the District and its needs. "I have ridden the bus routes and audited contractor employee files to ensure that they follow proper protocol and are compliant with all of the State's regulatory agencies."

Dolce assessed each bus route and scheduled extra training for drivers and attendants who transport Waverly students and students with special needs. She also addresses the concerns of parents, administrators, bus drivers and attendants regularly.

She believes the interactions between children and the adults who ride school busses can have a profound effect on students and she encourages monitors and drivers to build a rapport with the riders. "A connection is critical," said Dolce. "It could be something as simple as saying, 'Hi, how are you? How was your day? Are you excited for school?'" She continued, "Praising students and reinforcing positive behavior, just like they receive in school, also goes a very long way."

Dolce has more than a decade of experience in school district

transportation. She holds numerous state licenses/certifications, including: A New York State Education Department Master Instructor, School Bus Driving Instructor and a NYS DMV licensed Article 19-A examiner. Before taking on this new role, Dolce served as the Assistant Director of Transportation in the Clarkstown Central School District, where she was responsible for around 180 employees who transported more than 8,000 students.

She started her career as a bus attendant and monitor for First Student with the Syracuse City School District. "I met students who were

visually and hearing impaired or used wheelchairs. These children were the best, and I also felt that they were the students who needed more attention. I am a person who always does the right thing and takes more time to do what it is best, even if it is harder."

Dolce soon earned advanced certification, started dispatching drivers and training them. She was promoted to a Safety Supervisor in 2010. In 2013 she became a Safety and Training Supervisor where she gained additional experience.

She took on the role of Safety Manager in 2015 at First Mile Square Bus Company in Yonkers where she managed routes in multiple districts. Dolce also worked at Total Transportation in New York City.

Her goals in Eastchester are to continue to build upon the relationships with the contractors and research new technologies to improve safety. She holds training workshops throughout the year to ensure the safety of the drivers, monitors and students. She meets with drivers to discuss ongoing issues to resolve problems.

When she is not overseeing the bus routes, Nicole likes to spend time with family and friends, go to the gym, cook, read, paint and garden.



You can read more about Ms. Dolce, Ms. Shearer and Mr. Blair on our website www.eastchesterschools.org

Kids' Korner

Welcome to a new segment in the Eastchester Eagle. In each edition of Kids' Korner, we hear from an elementary school student who shares his/her experiences in the Eastchester School District.

Hi! I am Siena Versaci. I am a member of the Anne Hutchinson Student Council. Student Council works as a team to solve problems, helps with deciding what good deed we will do for the next month, and acts as student representatives in our school.

What I like about Student Council is that we are given the chance, as students, to give our opinion and help out as kids. This gives us the opportunity to improve our school environment.

One of our good deeds was writing cards for the children at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital and we put a one dollar donation inside. The money in the card will be used to support a learning center for the kids. The children could spend two months to a few years at the hospital, and this is why it is important for them to keep up with schoolwork.

These experiences of giving make me feel like a better person and it makes me want to do more.

Siena Versaci

ANNE HUTCHINSON, FIFTH-GRADER



The Loukoumi Make A Difference Foundation Treatment and Literacy Program

A movement to make a difference for patients at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital started when Anne Hutchinson students designed handmade cards to send to children with cancer and then collected a dollar from families. Five years and hundreds of thousands of dollars

later, those small acts of kindness allowed St. Jude to open The Loukoumi Make A Difference Foundation Treatment and Literacy Program.

Eastchester forged a partnership with The Loukoumi Foundation and its founder, Eastchester resident and parent Nick Katsoris in 2010. Katsoris had written a book about a lamb named Loukoumi who did good deeds, and the idea caught on in Anne Hutchinson and spread to Waverly and Greenvale.

In October, Katsoris traveled to St. Jude's in Memphis, Tennessee, where he saw his dream of building a room where children could receive instruction while getting their treatment, come true.

"It has been an honor working with the Eastchester schools and students across the country to make this project a reality. The Loukoumi Foundation now unites over 100,000 children across the country to make a difference for projects that mean something to them. This project for St. Jude, in particular, shows that no good deed is too small and that together, with a handmade card and \$1, we can make a difference," remarked Katsoris.

Anne Hutchinson students learned they could accomplish great things when they worked together.

Teachers Arlene O'Neill and Perri Ross worked with the first students and Bobbi Iacovelli and Felicia Maldari continue the effort today. Greenvale families raised more than \$8,000 dollars over three years.

High School sophomore Ava Tsapatsaris and her mother traveled with Katsoris to Tennessee. Tsapatsaris was among the first group of students to team up with St. Jude when she was in elementary school. She continued her fundraising efforts and raised \$11,000 for the hospital. Tsapatsaris is considering a career as a pediatric oncologist.



Student Engineers

Fourth-graders at Greenvale twisted, twirled and tied pipe cleaners together to build a free-standing tower. The Makerspace Project taught the students about collaboration, communication and perseverance.

Before the students started the activity, teacher Toni Gamils told the class, "You may think this is easy, but it not."

Each team drew a design and then started constructing. Throughout the class, the task became more difficult when the students were given new instructions. They were soon told that they could only use one hand to complete their tower and when they were allowed to use both arms again, they couldn't speak. The students had to learn how to communicate utilizing different methods that included motioning to each other and writing down directions.

Some of the towers fell down and the student-engineers started over or made adjustments to their structures. As time started to run out, you could see on their faces how serious they had become.

Many of the groups revised their plan as they worked. "We had to add a really big base to balance it," said Gianna DiArco.

A group of four students who named their team, "The Best Builders" created the tallest pipe cleaner tower standing 24 inches tall. Their strategy represented teamwork. "We all wrote down what we wanted to build and then we made one project," said Daniel Lucente.

National Merit Semifinalist



National Merit Semifinalist honored. From left to right: Eastchester High School Principal, Dr. Jeffrey Capuano, senior Elias Dube, School Counselor Brianne Hickey, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction, Scott Wynne.

BOARD OF EDUCATION

Dr. Cheryl Smith, *President*

Robert Summer, *Vice President*

Sally Veltidi, *Secretary*

David Carforo, *Trustee*

Vito Catania, *Trustee*

Tara Conte, *Trustee*

Judah Holstein, *Trustee*

Erin Murray, *Trustee*

Steve Projansky, *Trustee*

Eastchester 5K

Thank you to the 765 runners who registered for the Eastchester 5K Race and to all the supporters and volunteers who made the day such a success!!

On Sept. 29, participants joined together for a fun morning – to raise money for our community. As a result of your generosity, donations were made to the Eastchester High School Cross Country Teams, Track & Field, and the Matthew DeMarco Memorial for Paws Project. Student athletes are receiving much needed equipment and the Eastchester Public Library will commence a For Paws Project.



Halloween

Rainy weather did not dampen the spirit of our students on Halloween! Ghosts, goblins, princesses and superheroes marched inside and enjoyed a spooktacular day!

