

Eastchester Eagle

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE EASTCHESTER UNION FREE SCHOOL DISTRICT

**A Spanish version of this newsletter is available upon request at the District Clerk's office.
Please contact the District Clerk at (914) 793-6130 ext. 4201**

Una versión en español de este boletín está disponible a solicitud en la Oficina del Secretario del Distrito. Comuníquese con la Secretario del Distrito al (914) 793-6130 ext. 4201

Dear Eastchester Community Members,

As we prepare for the district's annual budget vote, there are a few facts that are important to note about the proposed budget for the 2025-2026 school year and how we will continue the strides that have been made over the last several years.

First, the budget treats you, the taxpayer, respectfully and fairly. Our tax levy increase not only stays below the New York State tax cap, but, at 2.37%, our tax levy increase remains below the consumer price index, currently at 2.95%. The average Eastchester resident whose home is assessed at \$8,588 will pay an additional \$302 next year, a 2% increase over the current year..

Second, next year's \$110,914,498 investment in our children stands at the "sweet spot" of 48 school districts reporting through Westchester Putnam School Boards Association, 2025 (WPSBA). Eastchester's 4.9% increased investment in K-12 curriculum and new programs comes with a 2.4 % tax rate increase that stands near the lowest quartile of those same WPSBA school districts. We are taxing low but spending high on our children.

Third, our improved student performance these past three years, when combined with innovative programs, such as Foreign Language for Elementary Students (FLES), Accelerated Learning Program (ALP), increased student participation in more rigorous Grade 8 Algebra/Earth Science Regent courses and more high schoolers enrolling in our expanding Advanced Placement course options, speaks volumes to Eastchester now ranking amongst the top performing Westchester school districts.

Fourth, this budget supports a major shift in resources away from central administration and into the five Eastchester schools. This year we had 2.4 literacy coaches helping to improve student performance in ELA, reading and writing. Next year we will have three full-time literacy coaches at each elementary campus.

This year, we had no Math/STEM coaches visiting classrooms, modeling lessons, helping improve lesson plans and curriculum. Next year we will have three full-time Math/STEM coaches at each elementary campus.

This year, we had no subject area chairs at the middle school. Next year, we will have five Grades 6-8 Chairs in ELA, Math, Science, Social Studies and Special Education, giving our middle schoolers the same advantages that our 9-12 students currently enjoy.

BUDGET SUMMARY

Proposed Budget
\$110,914,498

Budget to Budget Increase
4.9%

Tax Levy Increase
2.37%

SCHOOL BUDGET VOTE

**Tuesday,
May 20, 2025
6:00am – 9:00pm**

**Eastchester
Middle School Gym
(Enter on Lincoln Ave.)**

**Garth Road residents
must vote at Eastchester
Middle School**



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Valedictorian, Salutatorian Offer Advice for Success

There may not be any hard-and-fast rules about how to make the most of one's time in high school, but EHS seniors Aidan Ruane and Grace Sheehan certainly seem to have figured it out.

Last month, Ruane and Sheehan were officially announced as the Valedictorian and Salutatorian, respectively, of the EHS Class of 2025. And although their personal journeys may be unique, there is one major similarity that defines both of their academic journeys: a willingness to tackle new challenges head on.

The two students will be among those selected to give an address at Eastchester High School's commencement ceremony on June 27, which means Ruane and Sheehan have spent the better part of the last few weeks reflecting on the essence of their experience in Eastchester. Ruane and Sheehan have grand plans post-graduation—Sheehan intends to study English at Boston College while Ruane says he will explore STEM opportunities at Cornell University but both can trace their passion for academics back to specific classes early in their scholastic careers.

"I really enjoyed my social studies classes in middle school, particularly in eighth grade. Even during Covid, U.S. History became one of my favorite classes," said Ruane. "Even though I'm planning to major in a STEM field, I've always loved history and eventually became the president of the Rho Kappa Social Studies Honor Society once I got to the high school."

Sheehan noted that one of her earliest memories of falling in love with school went back to her time as a fourth-grader at Greenvale. She said that the class inspired her to seek out greater challenges as she moved through middle and high school, although she did recommend that students work closely with their parents and guidance counselors to chart their own academic course while setting realistic goals and expectations for themselves.

"I remember having such a good time in Ms. Cassaro's class in fourth grade; I loved all the activities we did, and I was excited to come to school each day," said Sheehan. "I think you need to know when you should push for a challenge and when to back off, but I recognize that you tend to learn more about yourself when you challenge yourself academically than if you're staying in your comfort zone."

"For instance, coming from the middle school to the high school was kind of a big culture shock, but I'm happy that I took the classes that I did because I really think they benefitted me," she added. "I took Algebra 2 in sophomore year, and I think that's a class that really taught me how to study; I knew it was going to



Aidan Ruane, left, and Grace Sheehan were named the Valedictorian and Salutatorian, respectively, of the EHS Class of 2025.

be a lot of work, and it was important for me in learning how to manage more difficult courses."

But there is more to the high school experience than academics, both students say. In particular, both have found that participation in extracurricular clubs and interscholastic athletics has played a huge role in their experience in Eastchester.

In addition to running varsity track, Sheehan also serves as the editor of the yearbook and is an officer in Ski Club and 'Forum.' Ruane is the goalie on the Eastchester soccer team and also serves as the president of Rho Kappa and is the vice president of the senior class.

"I think if you're solely focused on the academic aspects of school you're not getting as much out of it," said Sheehan. "It's better to join clubs and stay involved."

"There's a club or an activity for every interest someone might have, and I love the fact that there are so many different opportunities to be exposed to different communities and interests," said Ruane. "If I had concentrated only on my studies, I wouldn't have met so many amazing people, and it's so important for personal growth to be able to do that."

Now, with their time in Eastchester quickly coming to an end, Ruane and Sheehan hope that future Eagles continue to strive for greatness while also recognizing the unique opportunities available to them in the district no matter what their interests may be.

"I'm thinking about one of the college essays I wrote that discusses how, sometimes, people think of things as impossible when they aren't," said Ruane. "There are so many resources available to students to help them with their classwork and their grades, but getting involved with the community can help you to learn more about yourself and the people around you."

2025-2026 Revenue Summary

| REVENUE CATEGORY | 2025-2026 PROPOSED BUDGET | 2024-2025 BUDGET | \$ CHANGE | % CHANGE |
|-----------------------|------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|--------------|
| Property Taxes | \$83,593,100 | \$81,655,399 | \$1,937,701 | 2.37% |
| Other Revenues | \$6,125,000 | \$5,595,607 | \$529,393 | 9.46% |
| State Aid | \$18,192,462 | \$16,116,485 | \$2,075,977 | 12.88% |
| Assigned Fund Balance | \$3,003,936 | \$2,325,000 | \$678,936 | 29.20% |
| GRAND TOTALS | \$110,914,498 | \$105,692,491 | \$5,222,007 | 4.94% |

2025-2026 Expenditure Summary

| BUDGET CATEGORY | 2025-2026 PROPOSED BUDGET | 2024-2025 BUDGET | \$ CHANGE | % CHANGE |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------|------------------|--------------|
| Administration/Operations | \$4,744,943 | \$4,192,698 | \$552,245 | 13% |
| Facilities/Operations/Security | \$8,089,732 | \$8,190,430 | -\$100,698 | -1% |
| Instruction | \$59,111,224 | \$58,225,765 | \$885,459 | 2% |
| Transportation | \$4,945,368 | \$4,909,744 | \$35,624 | 1% |
| Employee Benefits | \$26,320,398 | \$24,622,355 | \$1,698,043 | 7% |
| Debt Service | \$7,502,833 | \$5,351,499 | \$2,151,334 | 40% |
| Transfers to Other Funds | \$200,000 | \$200,000 | \$0 | 0% |
| GRAND TOTALS | 110,914,498 | 105,692,491 | 5,222,007 | 4.94% |

Transportation

The transportation budget includes approximately \$ \$1,375,547 for out-of-district home-to-school transportation to special education placements and nonpublic schools, which is based on the School District's current usage of such transportation, and upon the School District as part of the BEPT Consortium, awarding four (4) year contracts (Sept. 1, 2025, to June 30, 2029, including summers) for these transportation services to First Student. The rates for each subsequent year shall be the rates of the immediately preceding year increased by 3.5%. The approval of this budget will constitute continuation of the approval for the Board of Education to enter into five-year contracts with First Student for out-of-district home-to-school transportation and for summer transportation to special education placements and to nonpublic schools.

Projected Tax Bill Impact

NOTE: This projection assumes no change in the taxable assessed values. A change in assessment as calculated by the Town of Eastchester may cause changes to individual tax bills. Reduced assessments may raise the tax rate where conversely increased assessments may reduce the tax rate. Final rates are set by the Town of Eastchester in August.

| ASSESSED VALUE | AVERAGE | | | | |
|-------------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| | \$5,000 | \$7,000 | \$8,500 | \$11,000 | \$13,000 |
| 2024-2025 School Tax Bill* | \$8,141 | \$11,398 | \$13,934 | \$17,911 | \$21,167 |
| Estimated 2025-2026 Tax Bill* | \$8,318 | \$11,645 | \$14,237 | \$18,299 | \$21,626 |
| CHANGE FROM PRIOR YEAR | \$177 | \$247 | \$302 | \$388 | \$459 |

*Does not include STAR impact.

| | |
|---|----------------|
| 2024-2025 Tax rate per \$1,000 of Assessed Valuation..... | \$1,628 |
| Estimated 2025-2026 Tax Rate per \$1,000 of Assessed Valuation | \$1,664 |

★VOTE May 20, 2025 6:00am – 9:00pm★

District to Unveil New AI Platform

Preparing students for success once they leave Eastchester isn't only about providing them with the academic and emotional skills they will need later in life. It's also about ensuring that they will be proficient and knowledgeable in the use of the technology that may well re-shape the world over the course of the 21st century.

Next year, Eastchester schools will introduce a number of new initiatives and programs aimed at strengthening student familiarity with emerging technologies, including a district-wide Artificial Intelligence platform that will allow K-12 students to familiarize themselves with the building blocks of AI-learning and explore how this powerful tool can be used both effectively and responsibly.

After a year of research done by the district's AI Task Force—a group composed of teachers, students, administrators and other staff members—the district will unveil its first approved AI platform, MagicSchool, in order to enhance instruction across all grade levels.

The web-based tool is a useful resource for both students and faculty alike, said Robert Jacoby, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources and Technology, one that allows even those unfamiliar with AI technology to safely explore the benefits of machine learning.

"We want children to learn this new technology, but in order to best leverage the technology, they have to learn the building blocks," said Jacoby. "We don't want them just using ChatGPT to write an entire essay; we want to leverage AI to encourage an appropriate and honest use of the technology."

To that end, explained Jacoby, the web-based platform will be used to supplement—not replace—the critical thinking that is so important for students of any age.

"It gives teachers the ability to create an AI space for students, so while the teachers have a massive amount of tools at their fingertips, the students will be limited by what the teacher allows them to use," he said. "It's about placing guardrails, setting the students up for success, and helping them to better understand when it is appropriate to use AI."

One example of beneficial AI use might include analysis of a student's



writing—something students would use to supplement teacher feedback outside of normal school hours. Teachers—especially those at the elementary and middle school levels—will also be able to take texts that may be beyond students' reading levels and distill the important ideas into more accessible formats for younger learners.

"You may have a New York Times article, something clearly written for adults, but you want fifth graders to get an idea of it," said Jacoby. "With AI, you can take passages of text and change the grade level so the students are getting that content in a manner which aligns to their level of development."

Kristen Pynch—an EMS ELA teacher who was one of several faculty members to test various AI platforms for use in Eastchester schools—said she was eager to implement MagicSchool in her classroom and has already begun thinking about ways to enhance the educational experience of her pupils.

"From a teacher's standpoint, it's apparent how this can complement what we are doing, especially in differentiating work for students with varying educational needs," she said. "It's going to be exciting to see how this platform will help us get the most out of our instruction."

Jacoby acknowledged that although there is still some trepidation surrounding this new technology's use in schools, a thoughtful and considered use of AI tools will only serve to make students stronger learners and better prepare them for the rapidly changing world that will face them after they leave Eastchester behind.

"We aren't introducing some incredible technology that kids aren't already playing with, but we are exploring ways to focus on what children should be learning without having AI replace that learning," he said. "It's not about them coming up with the correct answers, it is about improving the learning that is already taking place."

Letter from the Superintendent

Continued from page 1

This year, we did not have Advanced Placement Seminar, Research, and Art courses for high schoolers. Next year, we will not only offer those opportunities, but we will have two additional special educators to make certain our AP courses remain accessible to more students.

Last year, Waverly did not have a school counselor nor did Anne Hutch and Greenvale enjoy specialized reading teachers trained in Wilson or Orton-Gillingham. Next year, Waverly will have its own full-time school counselor, and both Anne Hutch and Greenvale will each have one specialized reading teacher.

Lastly, over 800 of our Eastchester Eagle athletes will benefit from the District funding new Freshman Boys Basketball and JV Girls Flag Football teams, as well as supporting a middle school strength-and-conditioning coach. Additionally, all assistant varsity coaches will see a well deserved 80% salary increase to \$4,637 per sport, per season.

In K-12 technology, our high school students will benefit from a new Maker Space Lab for STEM and full 3-D printing. We are investing nearly \$400,000 of General and Capital funds for improvement projects that will include a new Student Information System (SIS); a new Artificial Intelligence platform for K-12 students and teachers; and completion of Apple's coding curriculum, supported by iPads and available to all at Anne Hutchinson, Greenvale and Eastchester Middle School.

Yes, it's a lot! But our children and taxpayers deserve no less than the best!

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Ronald D. Valenti.

Ronald D. Valenti, Ph.D.
Superintendent

Voting Information

What You Will See on the Ballot

Proposition #1

Shall the Eastchester Union Free School District of the Town of Eastchester, Westchester County, New York, adopt a budget for the school year 2025-2026 for the schools comprising said Eastchester Union Free School District, in the gross sum of \$110,914,498 and raise the necessary taxes required for said budget in one sum by tax upon the taxable property of the District?

Board of Education Candidates

Three (3) Board seats for a full, three-year team commencing on July 1, 2025. Each of the available Board seats will be held for a three-year term that will expire on June 30, 2028. To vote for a candidate whose name is printed on this ballot, fill in the oval below or next to the name of the candidate.

Vote for up to three (3) candidates:

- Laurie Giacobbe
- Christine Civitano-Lombardi
- Matthew Fanelli

Information about the Board of Education candidates can be found in the Important Information section of our website at www.eufsdk12.org.

Am I Eligible to Vote?

In order to vote in the district election, you must be:

- A citizen of the United States of America.
- A resident of the Eastchester School District for at least 30 days prior to the vote date.
- At least 18 years of age by the vote date.
- A registered voter with either the school district or with the County Board of Elections.

You are registered to vote if:

- You are on the Westchester County voter list AND have voted at least once during the last four years, OR
- You are registered with the school district.

Registration Applications

School District Voter Registration Applications

Applications for School District Voter Registration are available at the District Office and on the website at www.eufsdk12.org. This registration allows you to vote only in School District votes (Budget/BOE Trustee, Bond, or Referendum). Deadline for school district registration for the Annual Budget and Trustee Vote is Thursday, May 15, 2025.

Westchester County Voter Registration Applications

Qualified voters who register with Westchester County can vote in school district elections as well as other local and national elections. Registration applications are available locally at Eastchester Town Hall and Tuckahoe Village Hall. Applications can be downloaded at <http://www.elections.ny.gov/> Call 1-800-FOR-VOTE for additional information.

Absentee Ballots

Obtaining an absentee ballot is a two-step process.

An Application for an Absentee Ballot must be filed first with the District Clerk. Applications for absentee ballots may be obtained by contacting the District Clerk's office at 580 White Plains Road, Eastchester, NY 10709; Phone: 793-6130, ext. 4201, or by going to the website at www.eufsdk12.org. For more information, click on the Voter Information tab on the Board of Education page.

Deadlines

Applications must be obtained from the District Clerk at least seven days before the election if the ballot is to be mailed to the voter or by 5:00pm on the day before the election if the ballot is to be given personally to the voter. The completed ballot must be returned to the District Clerk no later than 5:00pm on the voting day, May 20, 2025.

SCHOOL BUDGET

VOTE

Tuesday, May 20, 2025

Poll Hours: 6:00am - 9:00pm

Eastchester Middle School Gym
(Enter on Lincoln Ave.)

Garth Road residents must vote at
Eastchester Middle School



SOARING TO EXCELLENCE
EASTCHESTER
 UNION FREE SCHOOL DISTRICT
 580 WHITE PLAINS ROAD
 EASTCHESTER, NY 10709
 (914) 793-6130

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BOARD OF EDUCATION

- Christine Civitano-Lombardi, *President*
- Laurie Giacobbe, *Vice President*
- Matthew Fanelli, *Secretary*
- Jill Cosentino, *Trustee*
- Dr. Jacqueline DiMarco, *Trustee*
- Sean Fellin, *Trustee*
- Christina Geagan, *Trustee*
- Robert Krukowski, *Trustee*
- Christie McCloskey, *Trustee*

SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

Ronald D. Valenti, Ph.D.

For more 2025-26 Budget Information, go to www.eufsdk12.org

2025-26 School Budget Notice

| OVERALL BUDGET PROPOSAL | Budget Adopted for the 2024-25 School Year | Budget Proposed for the 2025-26 School Year | Contingency Budget for the 2025-26 School Year* |
|--|---|--|--|
| Total Budgeted Amount, Not Including Separate Propositions | \$ 105,692,491 | \$110,914,498 | \$108,976,797 |
| Increase/Decrease for the 2025-26 School Year | | \$5,222,007 | \$3,284,306 |
| Percentage Increase/Decrease in Proposed Budget | | 4.94 % | 3% |
| Change in the Consumer Price Index | | 2.95% | |
| A. Proposed Tax Levy to Support the Total Budgeted Amount | \$81,655,399 | \$83,593,100 | |
| B. Levy to Support Library Debt, if Applicable | \$ | \$ | |
| C. Levy for Non-Excludable Propositions, if Applicable ** | \$ | \$ | |
| D. Total Tax Cap Reserve Amount Used to Reduce Current Year Levy | \$ | \$ | |
| E. Total Proposed School Year Tax Levy (A + B + C - D) | \$81,655,399 | \$83,593,100 | \$81,655,399 |
| F. Total Permissible Exclusions | \$4,171,949 | \$4,416,878 | |
| G. School Tax Levy Limit, Excluding Levy for Permissible Exclusions | \$77,483,450 | \$79,176,222 | |
| H. Total Proposed School Year Tax Levy, Excluding Levy to Support Library Debt and/or Permissible Exclusions (E - B - F + D) | \$77,483,450 | \$79,176,222 | |
| I. Difference: G - H (Negative Value Requires 60.0% Voter Approval - See Note Below Regarding Separate Propositions) ** | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | |
| Administrative Component | \$9,983,337 | \$8,719,468 | \$8,531,350 |
| Program Component | \$77,813,127 | \$86,602,465 | \$86,236,258 |
| Capital Component | \$17,896,027 | \$15,592,565 | \$14,209,189 |

* Provide a statement of assumptions made in projecting a contingency budget for the 2025-26 school year, should the proposed budget be defeated pursuant to Section 2023 of the Education Law.

** List Separate Propositions that are not included in the Total Budgeted Amount: (Tax Levy associated with educational or transportation services propositions are not eligible for exclusion and affect voter approval requirements)

| Description | Amount |
|----------------|--------|
| Not applicable | |

***The basic school tax relief (STAR) exemption is authorized by section 425 of the Real Property Tax Law.

Under the Budget Proposed for the 2025-26 School Year

Estimated Basic STAR Exemption Savings *** \$1,286

The annual budget vote for the fiscal year 2025-26 by the qualified voters of the Eastchester Union Free school district, Westchester County, New York, will be held at the Eastchester Middle School(s) in said district on Tuesday, May 20, 2025 at ___ am/pm prevailing time OR between the hours of 6:00am and 9:00pm, prevailing time in the Eastchester Middle School(s), at which time the polls will be opened to vote by voting ballot or machine. *Districts should include information according to Executive Orders and as advised by legal counsel.*