

**School Board Candidate Info Sheet 2021**  
**Eastchester Union Free School District/PTA Council**

1. Name: Jonah Rizzo-Bleichman

2. Education:

B.A. Economics and Political Science, McGill University, 2008

J.D., New York University School of Law, 2013

3. Current occupation/professional experience:

Corporate lawyer at a large New York City law firm since graduating law school.

Before attending law school, I worked for several years at a big-four accounting firm providing transfer pricing tax services.

4. How many years have you lived in Eastchester? Do you have children who are currently attending or have graduated from Eastchester public schools?

My family moved to Eastchester in 2016. We have one daughter at Waverly, one daughter who will attend kindergarten next year and one toddler who hopes to follow in her big sisters' footsteps.

5. Have you been elected to any leadership roles in the school district or in community organizations? What have you learned from these positions?

This is my first run for office. Since our schools adopted the hybrid learning model, I've helped lead grassroots efforts to get students back in classrooms full-time. I've attended rallies with other like-minded Westchester parents. I've organized letter and call campaigns. I've delved into New York State and CDC social distancing guidelines, and helped educate concerned parents and education leaders about the facts, and correct misinformation. I've collaborated with parents from other Westchester towns running for their own board elections. I've spent many hours on calls with state, county and local executives, legislators and administrators to advocate for students' full return to the classroom. I've reached out to traditional media outlets and on social media to spread the word about the injustices our children have endured and now I'm running for the School Board to give parents and students the voice they deserve. Through this advocacy, I've learned that we cannot be complacent and we cannot simply assume that our leaders are doing what's best for our children.

6. What do you see as the role of a School Board trustee?

School Board trustees must maximize educational impact using available resources, hold school administrators accountable for performance and manage and safeguard the school district's finances.

7. What skills do you see yourself bringing to the School Board?

Before starting my law career, I worked in transfer pricing, helping multinational companies allocate their taxable income efficiently across various tax jurisdictions in compliance with US and foreign tax rules. I've leveraged this accounting, regulatory and financial modeling experience in my current work as a transactional lawyer, using my quantitative savvy and creativity to develop my clients' visions into executable deal structures. In the education sector, I've represented many schools and other educational institutions in loan transactions and bond offerings, higher education institutions in mergers, foundations in charter school financings and venture capital funds in education finance and education technology investments. I will bring my financial and accounting knowledge to do a full review of our budget, and ensure every dollar of our limited resources is put to its highest use. I will bring my regulatory experience to ensure the school administration and my fellow board members have the facts about the ever-changing state school guidelines. And I will bring my private sector experience negotiating and executing high-stakes time-sensitive transactions to ensure our school district is reactive and efficient, and gets a fair deal where the stakes couldn't be higher.

8. What is your educational philosophy and how would it inform your work as a Board member?

A good education is holistic and a well-rounded student must learn social skills as well as the physical and mental discipline of athletics. While hybrid and remote instruction may have delivered some limited academic education, it has severely deprived students of social and physical education. We cannot afford to lose any more ground in these crucial areas. We must restore normal social interaction at school, and all athletics.

The greatest determinant of educational success is a culture of excellence. That culture starts with Eastchester families, many of which, like mine, moved to Eastchester primarily for its schools. We cannot maintain this culture unless our leaders share our view that education is essential. There is no curriculum, policy or amount of funding that can substitute for this culture of excellence.

9. How do you see the state tax cap impacting school budget decisions in the coming years? What will be your approach to budget decisions?

Unconstrained spending threatens not only the sustainability of our school district's finances, but also educational quality itself. Throwing money at a problem rarely fixes it, and often perpetuates the problem by masking symptoms and suppressing ingenuity for lasting solutions. The state tax cap is a crucial instrument of fiscal discipline, and must be adhered to.

10. What are your top three priorities for the Eastchester School District? How would you help advance these priorities?

My first priority is to return all Eastchester students to full-time five-day in-person school. Despite parents' repeated requests for school on Wednesdays, the administration has provided no good explanation for their continued refusal. There is a lack of will and accountability, but I believe the election of four new School Board trustees will put sufficient pressure on the administration to do what they should have done months ago.

My second priority is to return as much normalcy to school as is permitted under New York State guidelines. Recently updated New York State guidelines no longer recommend use of plexiglass barriers and they should be removed. All athletics must resume during their regular seasons, students should have access to their lockers and we must stop inhumanely reprimanding young children for socializing or playing tag at recess.

My third priority is to institute additional advanced coursework opportunities at all grade levels. All students learn at different paces and schools must provide for all students' educational needs. While Eastchester does an outstanding job with special education, it does little to challenge its gifted and talented students, especially in younger grades. When their needs aren't met, these students are at just as a great risk of failure as any other student.