



*Ronald D. Valenti, Ph.D.
Superintendent for Schools*

July 26, 2024

Dear Members of the Eastchester Community,

Last summer, the District hired a new Registrar, Fay Fotini, whose responsibilities include checking the residence of every child enrolled in our schools, grades K-12. With the full endorsement of our school board, I charged Fay with beginning a process of checking annually not only new kindergarten entrants, but second graders entering Ann Hutchinson and Greenvale, sixth graders enrolling at EMS and ninth graders entering EHS.

If someone proves their residence for Kindergarten, is that not sufficient for a child's entire school career in Eastchester?

The short answer is No!

We can agree a lot can happen during 12 years. Some families move out of Eastchester while new families move in. Some families separate, divorce, or establish residences elsewhere with shared child custody implications.

New York State law is very clear. A child must live in a residence within the Eastchester School District. This means living, sleeping and waking up each day in that home or apartment. The school district must verify who has "care, custody and control" of a child.

If not the parent, is there a legal guardian who can advise the district if a child sustains a playground injury, confronts a serious academic or behavioral problem, or needs testing for potential referral? These are serious questions, particularly when our most vulnerable children's health, safety and welfare are at stake.

So, my first request is to please cooperate this summer in helping us to complete the simple confirmation required to validate your child's residency. Whether the proof is an apartment lease or home deed, a Con-Edison or telephone bill, etc., we need to confirm residency for every incoming second, sixth and ninth grader for September 2024.

To date, here is the progress made by school and grade level:



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<u>Grade</u>	<u>Total Students</u>	<u>#Responded</u>	<u>%Responding</u>
Grade 9	259	151	58%
Grade 6	218	156	72%
Grade 2 (AH)	91	59	65%
Grade 2 (GV)	109	88	90%
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Total	677	454	67%

67% is passing for July, but we must do better. We must hit the statistical sweet spot of 95% to 99% by August's end and close in on 100% by the first day of school in September.

We will work with you to ensure only verified residents begin school in September.

Finally, we have uncovered 32 students this past school year who were illegally enrolled in Eastchester's schools. Based on their per-pupil education costs, we are looking at approximately \$1,000,000 of taxpayer funds that could have been redirected to students living in Eastchester and/or lower taxes in general for all residents.

Our Registrar monitors each case. We have hired a retired Eastchester police sergeant to track and chart where non-resident students actually live, many as far away as New Rochelle, Yonkers and New York City. I have sent numerous letters to families informing them they cannot return this September, absent proof of residency. Our principals, school counselors and secretaries are working with me to monitor the situation.

The Board and I believe we will succeed in these efforts to ensure we are spending tax dollars to educate only children who live in Eastchester.

Sincerely,

Ronald D. Valenti, Ph.D.

Superintendent