Defending My Education and Alma Mater

It is no secret that New Bedford High School (NBHS) is not the best place in the world, nor the safest of environments – this is something that has been known for decades. The student body has its fair share of problems, the school infrastructure itself has seen better days, and the administration and school system has been a little bit under par.

However, recent reports have begun to surface that are completely demolishing any ounce of the reputation that NBHS has worked diligently to build and uphold. This task is hard to accomplish in the times of distress and states of panic that the school is experiencing now, where it seems as though everyone has forgotten about the true goal of secondary education. Faculty, administration, and community members are fighting their own personal battles, which is being urged on by media attention (all of which has been negative, I might add).

As a proud alumni, I felt as though it was my responsibility to try to hold some of its reputation together by portraying to you the unique experience that I think the school offers. To me, NBHS is the only school in the area that affords students the total package in an education, and here are 5 reasons why:

1. New Bedford High School offers an incredibly wide range of classes. There are classes in everything imaginable, ranging from cooking to auto-shop to early childhood education to forensics. There are SAT prep classes as well as classes to prepare you for writing in college/college admissions essays. Most

importantly, the Advanced Placement program offers the widest range of classes in the area, offering students to study at a higher level and gain college credits in over 15 AP class offerings.

2. The staff and faculty is composed of amazing teachers. Throughout my time at the school, I had a multitude of teachers who I saw change the lives of kids who may have not had the backing that they needed at home. Also, teachers have academic and teaching records that are quite impressive, especially those who teach AP classes- many even teach at local universities in adjunct with their teaching job at the high school.
3. The arts program is one of the finest around. NBHS boasts an impressively talented pool of students, ranging from vocalists to musicians to actors to artists. The programs in the arts allow students to explore their talents and interests through artistic expression.
4. NBHS has one of the most successful athletic programs in the state. Athletics offer chances for students to establish bonds, learn teamwork, stay healthy, and most importantly, gives them motivation to stay out of trouble and keep their grades up. There are more sports team to choose from than any other school around, allowing for everyone to find something that’s right for them.
5. Most importantly, to me, diversity plays a huge role in the academic life at the school. Due to its urban setting, in a city that personifies the idea of the “melting pot,” the diversity of ethnicities, races, sexual orientations, religions, etc., is remarkable. In post-secondary education and the workforce, the ability to deal with diversity is an integral part of how successful you will be, as it is present in educational and work situations each and every day.

I know you’re probably thinking that every school offers this, but the truth is they don’t. Not a single school in the area offers every one of these things or even in the same capacity. Being at a reputable university, I quickly realized that each one of the above points has taught me a valuable skill that would be hard to be successful in college without.

The bottom line is that a majority of New Bedford High School students and faculty are doing all of the right things. There are a select few that, due to whatever reason it may be (home issues, poverty, etc.), are the constant problems within the

school. However, unlike other schools in the community, NBHS cannot just get rid of them- instead, they are forced to suspend them for a few days and anxiously await their return to see what they do next. On the other hand, however, there are a multitude of students who are getting into their dream colleges, gaining admission to some of the nation's top universities. Some of these include Harvard, Brown, Columbia, Yale, Tufts, etc. In fact, students in each of the years that I was in the school went to Ivy League schools and are doing incredibly well. This is a testament to the talented and gifted student body at the school and how well the school can prepare you for the post-secondary world.

Here's my take: a New Bedford High School education is what you make of it. If you sit there and give in to some of the insanity that is going on around you, you are guaranteed to end up becoming part of the insanity yourself. However, if you take any bit of advantage of all of the opportunities surrounding you- incredible classes, teachers, fine arts, athletics, and diversity- you will be successful and you will find yourself gaining an educational experience like none other. I guarantee that you will become a better-rounded person than any single person who attends any other school in the surrounding community, and I guarantee that you can, and will, get into the college of your dreams.

In summary, for those of you who are looking down upon New Bedford High School as a whole, shame on you. Shame on you for publically destroying the credibility of the school that is some of these kids' only chance to do something with their lives and better both themselves and their families. Shame on you for never stepping foot in the school but making judgments just based on what you hear, and being "afraid" to send your kids there. Shame on you for focusing on the negative rather than looking at all of the positive that floods off of Paul Walsh field each and every June, as students go out into the real world and do some incredible things at some incredible

institutions. That is the New Bedford High School that I know and love- Once a Whaler, always a Whaler.

Sincerely,
-A recent NBHS graduate who is now studying Biomedical Engineering with a double minor in Public Health and Chemistry at one of the top institutions in the country.