

Faces Of New Bedford #141: Rafaela DeFigueiredo Spence

Meet Rafaela DeFigueiredo Spence, 36-year-old Principal of W. H. Taylor Elementary School.



Rafaela moved to New Bedford with her family from Brazil, just a day before her seventh birthday. Transitioning into school in the US was a difficult task for her, as she only knew how to speak Portuguese, but made the move to english speaking classes after 3 years as a bilingual student. Despite the difficulties of learning a new language, she had such a huge passion for school and learning.

This love drove her into a career path involved in the education field, going to Umass Dartmouth where she received a bachelors degree in Psychology and a masters degree in clinical psychology, which helped her become an Adjustment Counselor in the New Bedford Public Schools. She started her career at Pacheco Elementary and it was while there that the principal, Marcia Faucher, inspired her to begin her journey to become a principal in the New Bedford Public School System.

After receiving her doctorate from Northeastern University in Urban Leadership, she became the assistant principal at Gomes School and would eventually move on to become the principal of

Kempton Elementary school. Due to restructuring in the cities school system, Kempton closed and Rafaela moved into the role of principal of W. H. Taylor School, located in the cities south end. While in this position she has helped facility the move to their new building and also impact the lives of her students each day. She finds joy in working in the city she migrated to as a child because of her love for the home it has become and her desire to see each and every one of her students succeed.

Faces of New Bedford is a project by Colton Simmons. If you are interested in booking a shoot or getting prints from the series email all inquiries to colton@coltonsimmons.com.

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