

New Bedford Public Schools Parent Information Meetings scheduled for February 1-3

New Bedford Public Schools will host three Parent Information Meetings in the form of virtual webinars on three consecutive evenings next week – Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, February 1-3, 2021. Meetings will start each day at 5:30 p.m. and end at 6:15 p.m. Each meeting will focus on specific areas of school operations affected by changes made in order to reduce the risk of viral exposure:

- Monday, February 1: Facilities/Operations Update, 5:30 p.m. to 6:15 p.m.
- Tuesday, February 2: Health Services Update, 5:30 p.m. to 6:15 p.m.
- Wednesday, February 3: Teaching/Learning Update, 5:30 p.m. to 6:15 p.m.

The meetings are a continuation of the district's community engagement initiatives, which have increased significantly in response to learning challenges posed by social distancing and other mitigation practices put in place at the start of the new school year last fall. Zoom links to the meetings will be available on NBPS social media and the district website, newbedfordschools.org.

Superintendent Thomas Anderson stated, "These sessions continue the district's commitment to community outreach efforts on a number of important issues, including video messages to parents, virtual open houses, the Student Resource Officer Program review, Family Institutes for Student Success events, Equity work, and numerous Wraparound Services designed to support students and their families."

Noting that the spring semester will focus districtwide on

measures to minimize or prevent learning loss for those students in most need, Superintendent Anderson added, "This learning focus targets Prevention, Recovery and Acceleration to ensure students continue to progress. Recovery efforts will assist to remediate those students who need additional support – academically and socio-emotionally, while also accelerating support and greater momentum for students who are already proficient in order to maximize their strengths."

The district's ongoing Equity work includes in-depth outreach activities. A 21-day Racial Equity and Social Justice Challenge with NBPS staff is planned to begin on February 5, 2021. Erin Duarte, NBPS Lead Wraparound Coordinator, noted, "The district is honored to have the YWCA SouthCoast in partnership to host the Challenge, which will broaden the discussion and understanding of racial equity and issues of social justice."

Of the district Equity, Diversity and Inclusion working group, Superintendent Anderson stated, "the team facilitated by an external partner consists of 30 people including students, community members, teachers, and administrators. Our key focus is to embed an equity plan's mission and vision into our NBPS Strategic Plan. Part of this process entails scrutinizing and assessing our practices, policies, and structures to evaluate their impact on our ability to be an organization that is inclusive and equitable."

NBPS' longstanding School Resource Office (SRO) Program is under review with community engagement a chief component of an examination of its mission and efficacy. Four virtual forums have taken place for students (Oct. 7), staff (Oct. 13), and the public (Oct. 14, Nov. 17) to gather feedback, personal experience and public opinion of the SRO program. As a result, two community-working groups met on January 7 to begin reviewing SRO models in other districts, (including districts that have removed SRO programs) and incorporating information collected throughout the review process, including input

gathered in the district's Community Conversations, surveys and focus groups.

Participating stakeholders in the SRO meetings have included the NAACP New Bedford Branch, New Bedford Coalition to Save Our Schools (NBCSOS), United Interfaith Action of Southeastern Massachusetts (UIA), parents, educators, New Bedford School Committee and the New Bedford Police Department. A final report is expected by the end of the school year.