

# **New Bedford Public Schools statement on contract negotiations with Paraprofessionals**

“The Paraprofessional roles are critically important in New Bedford Public Schools as we greatly value each employee who serves in that role,” stated Superintendent Thomas Anderson recently. “We value our Paraprofessionals and believe they deserve a current contract which would include pay rate increases.”

“As was shared during the last School Committee meeting, while not required to do so by law, we prefer to pay all staff more than the state minimum wage. Our contract with the Paraprofessionals dictates when we can adjust staff rates of pay.

Unfortunately, when we requested to the Union to raise the rates of pay, exceeding minimum wage, for the five impacted employees, the Union declined to address this issue at this time,” he said.

“At the March 8th meeting it was also highlighted that we have been open to negotiating since January 2019 and are currently in mediation for more than a year with the Paraprofessional Union, which is represented by the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), in hope of reaching an agreement on a contract,” Anderson said, adding, “My focus is to ensure that all staff are treated equitably.”

Currently the School Committee’s representatives are awaiting response from the Paraprofessional Union regarding the School Committee’s most recent proposal for a 3-year contract. On January 25, 2021, the School Committee’s representatives

forwarded the proposal to the Union through the mediator and their AFT representative. On February 12, 2021, NBPS administrators were informed, via the mediator that they hoped the Union would provide a detailed response to the district proposal on or about February 19.

Superintendent Anderson stated, "We remain fully committed to securing a ratified contract with the Paraprofessional Union and I look forward to participating in the discussions as I have done in the past negotiations."