

New Bedford Public Schools deploy new tech tools districtwide

Comprehensive upgrades represent over \$1.2 million in learning support technology.

New Bedford Public Schools students will soon be returning to classes and when they arrive, an array of new technology will be waiting to assist them. Thanks to a districtwide upgrade of devices and networks, representing an investment of over \$1.2 million, students and teachers will be newly equipped to support learning and teaching while also providing improved student support systems.

Robert P. Tetreault, NBPS Chief Technology Officer notes this latest I.T. upgrade is comprehensive in scope. "Our entire Technology Services team will be installing, calibrating and loading applications onto this brand-new equipment, which includes 1,200 Chromebooks and 900 laptops. In addition, 1,500 broadband hotspots are being provided for students to have Internet access on an as-needed basis through the Emergency Connectivity Fund (ECF) that we applied for to cover a large portion of these costs."

In thanking the Technology Services staff, Superintendent Thomas Anderson stated, "Providing all students with the most effective tools available to help improve learning is a NBPS top priority – that is, to increase student achievement in all areas. These I.T. improvements will enhance student support services and burnish communication contacts with their teachers. This is a component of equity in education; every student must have what they need to grow academically and to thrive socially and emotionally."

Funding, in part, comes from the ECF, which is made possible

through the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 to help schools and libraries support student learning, as well as through a combination of local and state funds.

Andrew O'Leary, Assistant Superintendent of Finance and Operations, notes, "New Bedford Public Schools has been able to maintain a level of hardware and network I.T. infrastructure investment of over \$2 million per year. Providing one to one technology for all students and staff is no longer a future goal, it is now the default expectation. This is a huge undertaking that NBPS Technology Services is implementing. It is far more than just device distribution; it requires the network infrastructure, and assuring reliable, safe, well-maintained platforms for learning and communication."

The new 1,200 Lenovo 300E and 500E Chromebooks will augment the district's existing inventory of 2,300 new units being distributed to Ashley, Brooks, Congdon, Pacheco, Lincoln, and Rodman Schools, of which were funded through ESSER, the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund, part of the national CARES Act of 2020.

"We are leveraging all available funding sources to replace old devices with brand-new units along with two dozen spare units per school. That way, no student will experience a delay if their unit malfunctions or breakage occurs; we'll have them back up and running," said Tetreault. Selected for ease of access and optimal performance, each unit has a "touchscreen so even a small child can use it. Similar to an iPad, students can touch the screen with their finger or use a small stylus pen that comes attached to each one," he added.

Over the summer, district-issued laptops for staff were serviced and upgraded with the latest operating systems and security settings.

At the three middle schools (Keith, Normandin and Roosevelt)

I.T. has installed 65-inch TouchView interactive flat panels, representing an investment of approximately \$250,000 per school and made possible by separate funding. Teachers will use the state-of-the-art LCD Electronic Whiteboards in their classrooms and will be receiving I.T. coordinated training to maximize the full capability of the new teaching technology.

Tetreault concluded, "At New Bedford High School, as part of our process of sustainability of technology, our incoming freshmen are getting all new laptops and those units will be their assigned laptops for the duration of their high school years.