

Report Highlights New Bedford Early Learning Initiative

A partnership in New Bedford aimed at improving outcomes for the city's youngest residents is featured in a report released today by the Rennie Center for Education Research & Policy.

The Condition of Education in the Commonwealth report gives state leaders a clear view of student progress in Massachusetts while pointing to areas for continued improvement. The report highlights the need to improve social-emotional learning efforts statewide, pointing to the New Bedford program as a successful example.

The New Bedford Birth to Grade 3 Alignment Partnership is an alliance of educators and community agencies aimed at expanding access to early education while creating a network of support for parents and educators.

"As many as 26 percent of New Bedford children enter kindergarten without any preschool or formal child care experience. This has a huge ripple effect for individual students and the system as a whole. The Birth to Grade 3 Alignment Partnership is addressing this issue, and finding ways to provide young learners with the social-emotional skills they will need throughout their lives," said Chad d'Entremont, Executive Director of the Rennie Center for Education Research & Policy.

An increasing body of evidence shows that the development of skills like grit, persistence, empathy and good decision-making is tied to better academic performance, higher college retention rates, increased employment rates and wages, and better overall health and well-being.

In New Bedford, the alliance of public preschool educators, community-based providers, and representatives from public

housing, mental health, the libraries, and arts organizations has made strides in addressing literacy, social-emotional skills, and parent engagement. The alliance has also helped educators collaborate, sharing professional development and data.

“We know that our schools alone cannot meet the needs of our youngest learners and their families. New Bedford’s Birth to Grade 3 partnership is an example of how we, as a community, have come together to focus on preparing and supporting our kids and those who serve them. This partnership provides professional development and services that give our children the best advantage to be successful at the beginning of their educational lives. This initiative has set the stage for a strong foundation for a bright future for each and every one of our preschoolers,” said Dr. Pia Durkin, Superintendent of New Bedford Public Schools.

The Rennie Center for Education Research & Policy’s mission is to improve public education through well-informed decision-making based on deep knowledge and evidence of effective policymaking and practice. As Massachusetts’ preeminent voice in public education reform, we create open spaces for educators and policymakers to consider evidence, discuss cutting-edge issues, and develop new approaches to advance student learning and achievement. Through our staunch commitment to independent, non-partisan research and constructive conversations, we work to promote an education system that provides every child with the opportunity to be successful in school and in life. For more information, please visit www.renniecenter.org.

The Condition of Education project is supported by the Barr Foundation, the Irene E. and George A. Davis Foundation, IBM Corporation, and the Noyce Foundation.

