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THE WRAP-UP

The official newsletter of the
New Bedford Public Schools Wraparound Services

WHAT'S INSIDE:

WHERE ARE WE HEADED? -
2

GOMES SCHOOL: SAFE,
KIND, RESPECTFUL,
RESPONSIBLE - 3

MEET KEVIN GIFFORD,
DEVALLES WRAP - 4

COMMUNITY CORNER:
NORTHSTAR LEARNING
CENTER - 5

END OF THE YEAR
SHOUT-OUTS! - 6

Welcome to the Wrap-up!

We have created this quarterly newsletter to bring to you the exciting news and work taking place throughout the New Bedford Public Schools district around safe and supportive schools and family and community engagement. We hope the Wrap-Up is something our educators, students, families, and community partners look forward to as a way to keep up with the great things happening in our schools. So stay tuned for stories, photos, and updates that will brighten your day and make you proud to be a member of the New Bedford Public Schools community.



*Student peer trainers with the Anti-Defamation League's
A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE program at Youth Congress on April 12, 2019*

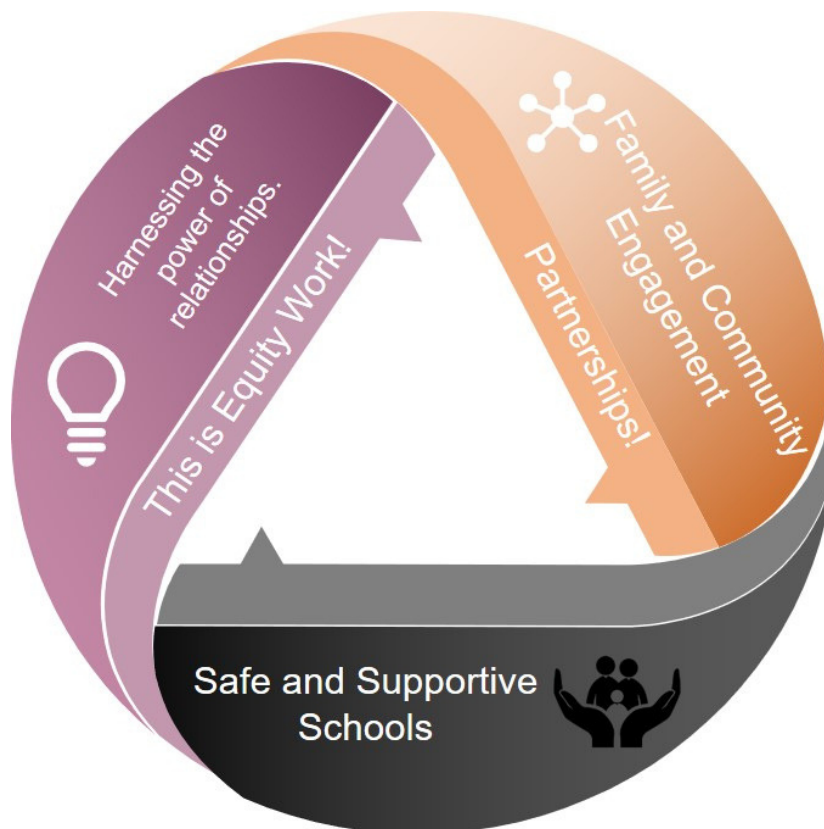
WHERE ARE WE HEADED?

By Jariel Vergne

The Wraparound Services at New Bedford Public Schools is working collectively to create systems and practices that actualize “Safe and Supportive schools” and Authentic Family and Community Engagement. To achieve this goal, we have interwoven several initiatives to align our systems and to create a philosophy and approach to the work that places the social emotional development and engagement of families and communities at the center of our work.

To ensure that every building, classroom, and hallway that our students enter, as a student of New Bedford Public Schools, is safe and supportive to their whole well-being, we have implemented PBIS (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports) in 21 NBPS schools over the past three years, and have integrated a social emotional learning (SEL) curriculum into the education of our students. We now have 11 schools that are actively working to use, through safe and supportive schools, a trauma-sensitive approach through professional development and a partnership with Lesley University. A trauma-sensitive school is a safe environment that promotes positive relationship-building among peers and with adults, understands the impact of traumatic experiences on behaviors and development, and enables students to self-regulate and succeed academically. We’ve continued a great relationship with NorthStar Learning Centers, through which students have been provided additional academic and social-emotional support through shared learning experiences and a supportive learning community.

We’ve also established guidelines and values that lead our Family and Community Engagement work through the three E’s: *Engage, Educate, and Empower*. The three E’s guide our approach to engaging the families and greater community with the education of our students. At the core of these efforts is our belief in equitable and culturally competent education and engagement. Families are now able to access this support, resources, and more through school-based Family Engagement Centers located at several schools throughout the district, as well as through the Family Institute for Student Success (FISS), which was launched this year as a way to engage families, provide information about ways they can support their children’s success in education, and develop an authentic relationship with their child’s school.



GOMES SCHOOL: SAFE, KIND, RESPECTFUL, AND RESPONSIBLE

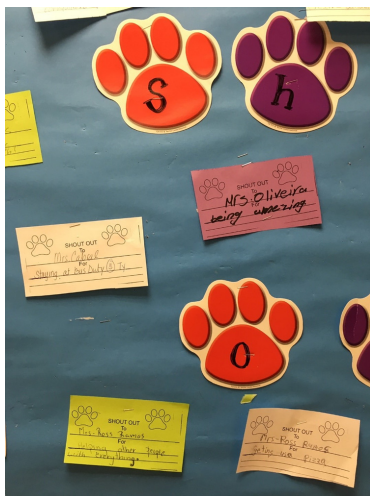
By Elissa May



The Gomes School's PBIS team is improving the school culture and climate through their four PBIS virtues: Safe, Kind, Respectful, and Responsible. The students of Gomes know these virtues well. During an interview with Hollie Rodrigues and Caitlin Gette-King, the school's PBIS coaches, a student "J" walked into the room and was able to name them without a blink of an eye.

"The virtues are engrained in the students and recited every morning on the announcements," explained Cherilyn Sharland, the school's School Adjustment Counselor. Coaches stated that it's improved school-teacher relationships as teachers are paying close attention their choice of words, and are recognizing more positive behaviors now, rather than reacting to negative ones.

"It took a little bit of time to get buy-in from everyone in the school," the coaches explained, "but now it's the norm." The school uses a common language to identify behaviors and offers incentives, in the form of "paws," to students demonstrating positive behaviors. The menu of incentives ranges from choosing the morning music, bringing a stuffed animal to school, or sitting in the teacher chair. Students may also choose an activity with a staff member, such as making slime, creating bracelets, or playing basketball with Mr. Hill.

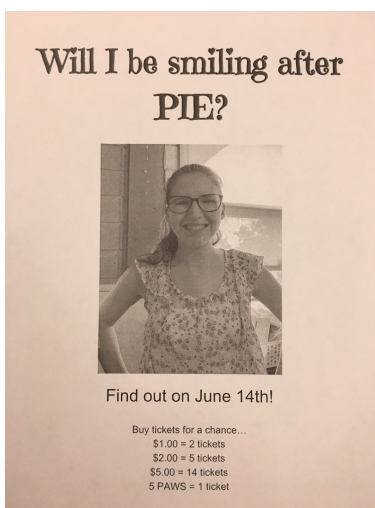


"Teachers are recognizing more positive behaviors now, rather than reacting to negative ones."

When rewarded for a positive behavior, the student earns a "paw" that they can bring home and share with their family. The hope for next year is to increase awareness about the PBIS practices at the school so that the families can mirror the practices at home. The schools plans to offer information at parent-teacher conferences and through other family engagement strategies. The school plans to increase their supplies for incentives through creative fundraisers of their own.

One fundraiser the school is implementing is a "pie in the face" taking place June 14th. The students will purchase tickets for a chance to pie a teacher in the face on the last day of school. Another successful fundraising opportunity implemented was a kindness flower sale that students could purchase for their teachers or peers. Students loved the opportunity to do a kind gesture, which is further demonstrated by the uplifting notes to others that are tacked to the bulletin board in the hallway.

The school has completed 3 years of the PBIS tier one practices, and is engaging in year 1 of the tier 2 practices. Because of the whole school approach and success in following through with systems and practices, the school has seen positive changes in the school culture, as students are building positive relationships with the adults and peers in their school. Keep up the great work, Gomes!



PBIS, which stands for Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, is a framework for the use of evidence-based practices that support the "academic, social, emotional, and behavioral competence of all students." Through the use of PBIS, "educators develop positive, predictable, and safe environments that promote strong interpersonal relationships with students through teaching, modeling, and encouragement."

(PBIS.org)

MEET KEVIN GIFFORD, DEVALLES WRAPAROUND COORDINATOR

By Erin Duarte

I have worked with Kevin Gifford for a few years now in the same department, but I never knew much about him or the type of effect he had on the students at Devalles Elementary. Recently, I had the chance to spend some time with Mr. G, as the students and families call him, at Devalles and observe him interact with the students. Every student whom we passed in the hallway greeted Mr. G with either a hug, a huge smile or a high five; so, to say Mr. G is well liked is an understatement. Mr. G is part of the fabric of teachers and staff members who have created a warm and welcoming environment at Devalles Elementary.

Mr. G states that working with children and families is his passion. **"Watching children meet milestones, close gaps and mature emotionally are the reasons I come to work every day.** We have children that struggle for many reasons, but with intense supports at school and at home I am able to guide them to success." Mr. G just does not guide, he mentors, actively listens and has an authentic relationship with students and families. This was evident when I spoke to some of the students who earn recess time to play football with him. J, a 5th grade male student, expressed how important Mr. G is to him and stated that Mr. G helps him to do the right thing at school and even speaks to his mom when he misbehaves at home and gives her "punishment ideas." Another student praised Mr. G for his acceptance of him, saying "Mr. G makes me feel safe, so I can be me." When you watch Mr. G interact with the students, it is clear that he is molding the future of these students one day at a time.



***"I do not know
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Each of the seven wraparound coordinators in the district function differently depending on their placement. Mr. G states his role is unique at Devalles. **"This position gives me the opportunity to bridge the gap between the school, the homes of the students and their families."** A normal school day for Mr. G consists of supporting students behaviorally, connecting families with services, incentivizing work production, conducting home visits for attendance, and much more. During the summer, Mr. G spends a lot of time in the surrounding neighborhoods participating in activities with students and families in order to maintain the positive relationship he has with them. Mr. G feels that the summer months are very important. Through this contact, students and families feel comfortable and value their relationship with him because he spends time with them in their neighborhood and in their homes.

A parent of a 4th and 5th grade student stated, "I have a great rapport with Mr. G. He is very supportive of myself and my family. It is not easy being a wife of a fisherman because my husband is out to sea most of the time, but Mr. G is the perfect person in the school. He is very supportive of my two children. I do not know what my children's lives would be like without somebody that is so supportive of them in school." Another parent of 3rd, 4th and 5th graders expressed, "I appreciate Mr. G's consistency with my children. They can always count on him to be there for them, whether it's a bad day, frustrations from home, not knowing how to complete tasks, or having issues with other peers, Mr. G is always there with open arms." It is evident that families feel comfortable and safe to reach out to Mr. G to have difficult conversations or to find supports in the community.

It is the end of the school day at Devalles and the students have just received their spring photo package. Several students ran up to Mr. G to hand him photo key chains of themselves. I asked Mr. G if he has enough key rings to place all the photos and he responded no. He replied, "I do not have enough keys to place them on but I will hang them on the board in my office, and when they are further in their lives and doing well, I will reflect on those pictures and remember the story of each one of them and how I have impacted their life, but most importantly how they impacted mine."

COMMUNITY CORNER: NORTHSTAR LEARNING CENTERS

By Zoe Hansen-DiBello, Ph.D.

NorthStar Overview

Growing out of local community action during the civil rights movement, NorthStar was founded in 1974 to reach and support New Bedford's underserved and marginalized children and families to become successful in school and in life. We believe that every child can succeed with a mix of services and support that meets their developmental needs. We are a people of color-led organization whose programs benefit all. Diversity is a strength and resource that leads to smarter, better informed decisions.

For more than 40 years, NorthStar has provided innovative educational programming to meet the complex needs of New Bedford's children. NorthStar is the only local organization that combines education with mental health services, a model that is essential to educating extremely low-income children suffering from trauma. All of NorthStar Learning Centers' programs are grounded in recognition that educational attainment is the only viable route out of poverty. Built into these programs are different levels of support from intensive to sustained support strategies as children overcome mental health problems, past trauma, and life skill deficits that may undercut their educational progress. NorthStar has a long history of collaborating with the New Bedford Public Schools on a wide range of initiatives and grant-funded programs to promote academic achievement and educational attainment.



Our New Center

We are currently in the process of a capital campaign to consolidate our two early education centers into a brand new state-of-the-art 14,000 square foot building on the corner of Hyacinth and Rivet Street in the South End of New Bedford. This transformative and impactful project will: (1) expand the capacity of our nationally-accredited Early Education and Care program from our current enrollment of 96 to 134 children, (2) improve operational and financial efficiencies, (3) elevate an underserved neighborhood and reduce urban blight with a building that symbolizes hope and demonstrates the value of educating young children, and (4) create a model for New Bedford and the region with respect to design and operations in extremely low-income communities.

The new center will accommodate 10 classrooms, parent resource rooms, a gross motor/community room, staff offices, outdoor play space, edible garden and a natural green landscape. In addition to culturally responsive practices, teaching and learning will be infused with a maker-mindset philosophy and STEAM principles will be embedded into the curriculum resulting in an increase of creativity, curiosity and discovery. In addition to providing excellent early education and care, we hope to have workshops and other engagement opportunities for our families and the neighborhood at large.

Furthermore, our new center is more than a building to us, as we have been inspired and excited in our journey with other local early childcare providers and New Bedford Public Schools to convene stakeholders to better understand and promote Kindergarten readiness, which we see as increasing educational equity and creating real system change for our community.

END OF THE YEAR SHOUT-OUTS!

We want to give a shout-out to some of the great events and initiatives that happened this year around safe & supportive schools and family and community engagement!

These include:

55 graduates of the Family Institute for Student Success (FISS) program

Cultural Night at Keith

New Bedford Public Schools Art Show

Pulaski CBIP Family Night

Schools' growth with PBIS Tier Fidelity Inventory (TFI's)

11 Trauma-Sensitive Schools

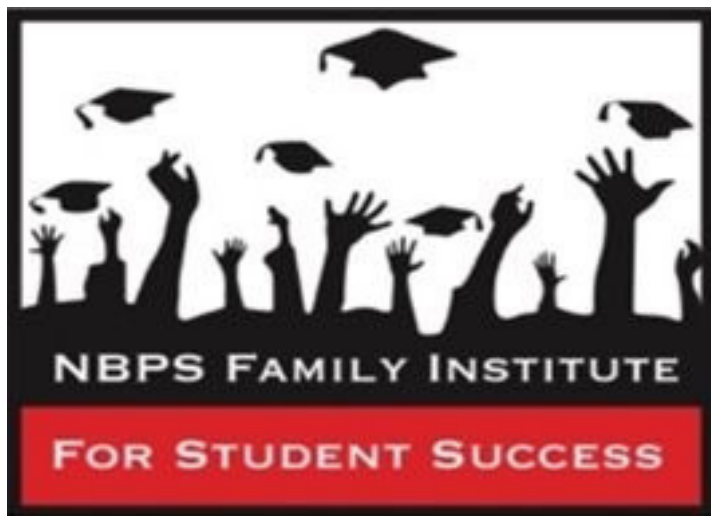
Family Engagement Leadership Team presenting at the National Conference

Mindfulness launches in 4 district schools with a whole-school approach

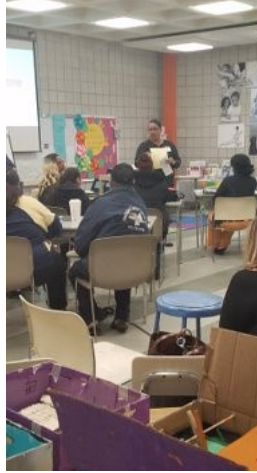
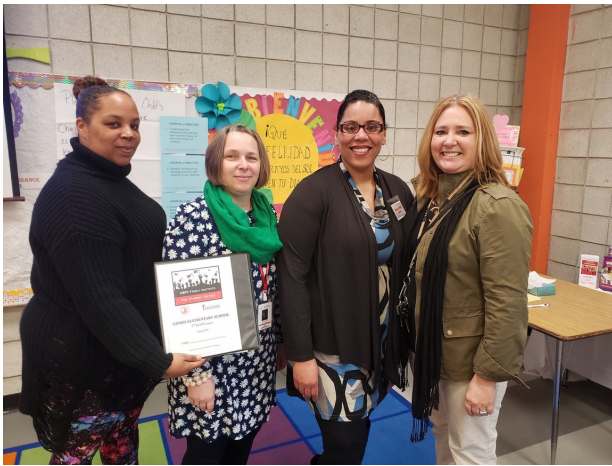
Congdon school fully adopts SEL and family engagement practices

Normandin Middle School "Shoes of Love"





FISS Graduation 2019



To our first graduating class....
Congratulations!