

Public Comments

From: cebusch <cebusch@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, June 15, 2020 2:59 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: Public Comment - 15 Jun 2020 Meeting - Remove SROs from NBPS

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the New Bedford Public Schools. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Name: Cara Busch
Address: 26 Milford St, New Bedford, MA 02745
Subject: Remove SROs from Schools

Dear School Committee Members,

School Resource Officers (SROs) are one of many pillars of institutional racism in the United States. **They criminalize black children and must be removed immediately from New Bedford Public Schools.** The data has shown for years that black students are more than 3 times as likely to be arrested at school than white students. And, they are more than 2 times as likely to be arrested at school. While police are in schools, they are leveraged for minor discipline issues(1). Students funneled into this school-to-prison pipeline are not given the humanity or services they deserve and that their white, suburban peers receive as an American birthright.

SROs are one of many pillars of institutional racism in the United States. **They are a waste of educational funds and must be removed immediately from New Bedford Public Schools.** Based on the documentation available online, it appears that New Bedford spent at least \$575,000 on SROs in FY19. That's more than was devoted to Fine Arts, Elementary After School, or PhysEd/HealthEd/Athletics. Are our schools so well funded that all our students are soaring past educational benchmarks? Is the budget so rich that we have enough counselors to support our students' emotional needs and future goals? Are there overflowing rivers of money that teachers are using, instead of their own cash, to buy all the supplies they need to do their jobs? No? Then the great news for us is that we've identified a line item that was already detrimental to our students. Now cut it.

School Resource Officers are one of many pillars of institutional racism in the United States, and so they must be removed immediately from New Bedford Public Schools. It is not enough for our community institutions to merely attempt to be not racist. It is not enough to make a statement. It is not enough to kneel. It is not enough to point to a mural of Frederick Douglass. It is not enough to applaud the diversity of our community. It is not enough to say Black Lives Matter. We have to mean it. We have to do it. And we have to do it now. De-policing New Bedford Public Schools is the lowest-of-low hanging anti-racism fruit. If SROs want to work for our students, there are more than 50 open positions for them apply to (3).

Best,
Cara Busch

P.S. This method of public comment is disappointing. The Covid-19 pandemic should not be an excuse to exclude the public from directly listening in on school committee meetings and engaging in true public comment. Please open the videoconference line to the public. For this meeting, I hope all public comment emails are published in the meeting minutes.

Cynthia Roy
63 Calumet St. New Bedford, MA 02744
508-858-1897

July 12, 2020

Dear School Committee Members,

Since I am unable to speak during public comment at this month's school committee meeting, I am submitting this written statement so that it can be read aloud at the meeting:

"I trusted the SROs (School Resource Officers) with my life," commented a former New Bedford High School (NBHS) administrator on a recent Facebook thread about police in schools. The moment the statement dropped, I imagined that everyone following the thread stopped, pausing for a long moment. Did she realize what she had just said? Unfortunately, not all Americans can trust the police with their lives, particularly Black males, as we've seen time and time again and most recently with the murder of George Floyd.

The elementary and secondary school teacher workforce is not as racially diverse as the students they serve or the population at large. In Massachusetts, according to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, only eight percent of teachers are of color. Because of White privilege, teachers do not share the same lived experiences as their students. White people aren't surveilled, criminalized, and dehumanized the way people of color are. The former NBHS administrator's comment as a White woman, and one with a formal position of authority, spoke to how unaware some can be regarding the experiences of people of color or what students of color are up against.

The demand to remove police from schools and invest in restorative services is a reasonable way to validate the experiences of Black youth and demonstrate a commitment to

racial justice. Quite frankly, it should be a no-brainer for New Bedford leadership to take up. The counterargument to keep police in schools is weak and grounded in prejudice. For instance, Barry Richards of WBSM, in his article, [Defunding School Cops is a Stupid Idea](#), provides an example of the implicit bias and quality of a counterargument circulating in our community: “This is the generation of gang bangers and school shootings...What type of moron would leave school kids and teachers defenseless...”

I suppose Mr. Richards is unaware that research does not support that SROs prevent school shootings or make schools safer; instead, the research shows that police can actually make students feel unsafe and promotes racial disparities and the criminalization and dehumanization of Black students. I encourage the New Bedford School Committee to become informed on the topic, take a look at the abundance of scholarly literature, watch [Reimagining School Safety](#), a forum that NBCSOS hosted recently on police in schools, and visit the [Cops and No Counselors](#) report by the American Civil Liberties Union to learn more. The implementation of police in schools in our nation and in Massachusetts and the arguments to keep police in schools is rooted in oppression, prejudice, and White supremacy.

I commend the Superintendent for stating that New Bedford Public Schools (NBPS) is an anti-racist organization in recent statements released to the community. How to be an anti-racist is a question many of us are asking ourselves and I do wonder what being an anti-racist organization means to the NBPS and the New Bedford School Committee.

The Facebook conversation mentioned above is not unique. As more and more schools across the United States respond to the demands of the Black Lives Matter Movement (BLM) by [removing police from schools](#), I have witnessed numerous local educators, including educators who are colleagues and friends, grapple with White privilege and [White fragility](#). It is difficult

for White people to come to terms with their own privilege, biases, and the ways in which they are complicit in racist structures/systems that work to oppress people of color. Educators need to think critically about the role of police in schools. Police are trained in law enforcement. They are not adequately trained to work with children -- not as informal educators, counselors, or even mentors. Why do we hold Massachusetts' educators and counselors to such high standards for licensure/certification, but allow police to come in and "wing it" with children? Even police functioning as mentors is questionable. Mentorship for Black youth by upstanding citizens, "good men," police, is arguably rooted in a harmful deficit mindset, a prejudice, about students of color and families of color. Black youth don't need fixing; it is the system that is broken.

There is a lot of work to do in our community and our schools. One way for NBPS to demonstrate its commitment to being an anti-racist organization is to validate the experiences of Black youth and respond to the demands of the community and the movement for Black lives to remove SROs from schools. Other ideas include expanding restorative practices, recruiting and retaining educators of color, working with White educators and education support professionals to better understand White privilege and grapple with White Fragility, and integrating the [Black Lives Matter curriculum](#) into NBPS.

Again, I am thankful and proud of the NBPS and my city for taking the position to be more than not racist, but actively anti-racist.

Sincerely,

Cynthia Roy

Public Comments

From: Ricardo Rosa <ricardorosa1973@yahoo.com>
Sent: Monday, June 15, 2020 4:00 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: Public statement for the school committee meeting - June 15, 2020

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the New Bedford Public Schools. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Greetings member of the committee,

Lately, there's been a great deal of public attention on the presence of police officers in schools. Police or SRO presence in our schools is now a norm rather than the exception. In many affluent communities, the reverse is true. It is disturbing, to say the least, to drive by the high school and the middle schools and to see the most what has become the most dominant visible symbol of current day schooling - a police cruiser. I submit this statement, on behalf of the New Bedford Coalition to Save Our Schools, in advocacy of the total dismantling of the SRO program in our schools. Until legislation is altered, the school committee should reduce SRO's to one point person who serves the district as a whole. Given a police shooting in 2012 of 15-year old Malcolm Gracia and countless testimonies of young people's interaction with the "gang unit," we feel that police presence in schools is traumatizing to countless young people.

We know that there are SROs who are effective in dealing with establishing connections with youths. The reality is that this is not what they are really trained for. Even if countless hours were spent in these "trainings" we don't want people with weapons in school buildings forging these connections. Although we approve of police officers familiarizing themselves with school layout during non-school hours as a way to train on entering and exiting school buildings in the event of emergencies, we are opposed to the housing of police officers within schools permanently. Permanently placing officers in schools means disciplinary situations that should be handled by teachers and administrators can easily escalate and lead to an arrest. Social, psychological and academic problems can easily devolve in a criminal justice problem given their presence. We do not want student to be socialized to police presence in their lives, particularly given the horrific stories of encounters throughout the country.

The school system should move to more deeply fund the school adjustment counseling program, counselors, home-school liaisons, culturally competent social workers, nurses, and specialized programs allowing for mentorship and positive youth development. Restorative or transformative justice programs is also a viable alternative to police presence. Of course, it must be well resourced and implemented throughout the school culture. A strong restorative justice program can establish a culture of accountability and interrupt youth arrests and suspensions. The program can also function in parallel to community peace rooms staffed by parents and volunteers adequately equipped in conflict resolution.

The NBCSOS will be launching a series of webinars starting next week with prominent scholars who study this issue. All members of the committee will receive an invitation. We encourage you to attend and to take action eliminate officers from our schools.

Ricardo Rosa
Co-Chair of the Coalition
36 Cindy Ln.
New Bedford, MA

Public Comments

From: Monique Onuoha <ogechi.xo@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, June 15, 2020 4:33 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: Public Demands For The School Department of New Bedford

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the New Bedford Public Schools. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

To whom it may concern,

My name is Monique Onuoha from 86 Nautilus st, New Bedford, MA 02744 and I demand that New Bedford Public Schools cease the use of School Resource Officers in our schools, institute a well resourced restorative practice/justice program and work to dramatically reduce the use of suspensions in the city's schools – Although we approve of police officers familiarizing themselves with school layouts during non-school hours to train on entering and exiting school buildings in the event of emergencies, we are opposed to the housing of police officers within schools permanently. Recent history and research has proven that school safety has not improved with the use and housing of permanent SROs.

Many students feel unsafe in the presence of police officers especially during the country's current exposure and response to police brutality. This is a local, statewide, and national problem and schools in both Providence and Minneapolis have responded to the issue by terminating their contracts with police departments.

The school system in New Bedford, MA should cease the use of SROs in our schools. We should make regular use of surveys and focus group interviews to understand student perspectives on disciplinary structures in their school environments. Students are best positioned to analyze and articulate the flaws of current structures and processes.

The school system should also report all suspensions publicly. In addition to the state mandated offenses, the public should be informed of all suspensions in any given academic year. *(already do this)*

A restorative practice/justice program should also be implemented as an interconnected part of the school culture. The program should be fully funded to include ongoing professional development for teachers, staff, and student leaders to focus on creating just and equitable learning environments, building and maintaining healthy relationships and healing harm and transforming conflict.

All faculty should be trained to better suit diverse and low income students rather than resorting to disciplinary action as a response to students displaying high amounts of stress and anxiety from experiences outside of school.

The school system should also update dress codes and educate their faculty on early development in young women and men to remove biases against different body types that lead to students being targeted.

Police officers and disciplinary measures in our schools and disciplinary measures can trigger anxiety in many of our students. Moreover it could lead to the increased criminalizing of students and an increase in the school to prison pipeline. Please vote to remove the School Resource Officers in our public schools and replace them with restorative justice programs and increased community based counselors.

Sent from my iPhone

Public Comments

From: John Owens <john.owens@uconn.edu>
Sent: Monday, June 15, 2020 4:33 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: Public Demands For The School Department of New Bedford

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Thanks,

John Owens

Public Comments

From: nikkijae2010@gmail.com
Sent: Monday, June 15, 2020 4:34 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: Public Demands For The School Department of New Bedford

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To whom it may concern,

My name is Nicole Jones from New Bedford, Massachusetts and I demand that New Bedford Public Schools cease the use of School Resource Officers in our schools, institute a well resourced restorative practice/justice program and work to dramatically reduce the use of suspensions in the city's schools – Although we approve of police officers familiarizing themselves with school layouts during non-school hours to train on entering and exiting school buildings in the event of emergencies, we are opposed to the housing of police officers within schools permanently. Recent history and research has proven that school safety has not improved with the use and housing of permanent SROs.

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Sent from my iPhone

Public Comments

From: lynea gilreath <lyneae27@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, June 15, 2020 4:35 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: Public Demands For The School Department of New Bedford

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the New Bedford Public Schools. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

To whom it may concern,

My name is [Lynea Gilreath] from [62 Bedford St/New Bedford/Massachusetts] and I demand that New Bedford Public Schools cease the use of School Resource Officers in our schools, institute a well resourced restorative practice/justice program and work to dramatically reduce the use of suspensions in the city's schools – Although we approve of police officers familiarizing themselves with school layouts during non-school hours to train on entering and exiting school buildings in the event of emergencies, we are opposed to the housing of police officers within schools permanently. Recent history and research has proven that school safety has not improved with the use and housing of permanent SROs.

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Sent from my iPhone

Public Comments

From: Jaimie Anthony <jaimiemanthony@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, June 15, 2020 4:35 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: Public Demands For The School Department of New Bedford

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To whom it may concern,

My name is Jaimie M. Anthony from New Bedford, Massachusetts and I demand that New Bedford Public Schools cease the use of School Resource Officers in our schools, institute a well resourced restorative practice/justice program and work to dramatically reduce the use of suspensions in the city's schools – Although we approve of police officers familiarizing themselves with school layouts during non-school hours to train on entering and exiting school buildings in the event of emergencies, we are opposed to the housing of police officers within schools permanently. Recent history and research has proven that school safety has not improved with the use and housing of permanent SROs.

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Public Comments

From: Camaro beatz <crisray05@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, June 15, 2020 4:35 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: Public Demands For The School Department of New Bedford

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To whom it may concern,

My name is [Cristian Romero} from [57 morgan st/New bedford/MA) and I demand that New Bedford Public Schools cease the use of School Resource Officers in our schools, institute a well resourced restorative practice/justice program and work to dramatically reduce the use of suspensions in the city's schools – Although we approve of police officers familiarizing themselves with school layouts during non-school hours to train on entering and exiting school buildings in the event of emergencies, we are opposed to the housing of police officers within schools permanently. Recent history and research has proven that school safety has not improved with the use and housing of permanent SROs.

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Sent from my iPhone

Public Comments

From: Shakira Duarte <shakiramarie2019@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, June 15, 2020 4:59 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: Public Demands For The School Department of New Bedford

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To whom it may concern,

My name is Shakira Duarte from New Bedford Ma and I demand that New Bedford Public Schools cease the use of School Resource Officers in our schools, institute a well resourced restorative practice/justice program and work to dramatically reduce the use of suspensions in the city's schools – Although we approve of police officers familiarizing themselves with school layouts during non-school hours to train on entering and exiting school buildings in the event of emergencies, we are opposed to the housing of police officers within schools permanently. Recent history and research has proven that school safety has not improved with the use and housing of permanent SROs.

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Sent from my iPhone

Public Comments

From: Cora-Dorothy Peirce <coradot@icloud.com>
Sent: Monday, June 15, 2020 5:13 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: Public Demands For The School Department of New Bedford

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To whom it may concern,

My name is Cora Peirce from 59 Thomas st New Bedford and I demand that New Bedford Public Schools cease the use of School Resource Officers in our schools, institute a well resourced restorative practice/justice program and work to dramatically reduce the use of suspensions in the city's schools – Although we approve of police officers familiarizing themselves with school layouts during non-school hours to train on entering and exiting school buildings in the event of emergencies, we are opposed to the housing of police officers within schools permanently. Recent history and research has proven that school safety has not improved with the use and housing of permanent SROs.

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Sent from my iPhone

Public Comments

From: Rachel Dzengelewski <rachel.dzengelewski@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, June 15, 2020 5:33 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: Public Demands For The School Department of New Bedford

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Sent from my iPad

Public Comments

From: pirri nolo <etirado007@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, June 15, 2020 10:44 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: Public Demands For The School Department of New Bedford

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the New Bedford Public Schools. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

To whom it may concern,

My name is Emilio Tirado from Mount Vernon st Nee Bedford MA and I demand that New Bedford Public Schools cease the use of School Resource Officers in our schools, institute a well resourced restorative practice/justice program and work to dramatically reduce the use of suspensions in the city's schools – Although we approve of police officers familiarizing themselves with school layouts during non-school hours to train on entering and exiting school buildings in the event of emergencies, we are opposed to the housing of police officers within schools permanently. Recent history and research has proven that school safety has not improved with the use and housing of permanent SROs.

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The school system in New Bedford, MA should cease the use of SROs in our schools. We should make regular use of surveys and focus group interviews to understand student perspectives on disciplinary structures in their school environments. Students are best positioned to analyze and articulate the flaws of current structures and processes.

The school system should also report all suspensions publicly. In addition to the state mandated offenses, the public should be informed of all suspensions in any given academic year.

A restorative practice/justice program should also be implemented as an interconnected part of the school culture. The program should be fully funded to include ongoing professional development for teachers, staff, and student leaders to focus on creating just and equitable learning environments, building and maintaining healthy relationships and healing harm and transforming conflict.

All faculty should be trained to better suit diverse and low income students rather than resorting to disciplinary action as a response to students displaying high amounts of stress and anxiety from experiences outside of school.

The school system should also update dress codes and educate their faculty on early development in young women and men to remove biases against different body types that lead to students being targeted.

Police officers and disciplinary measures in our schools and disciplinary measures can trigger anxiety in many of our students. Moreover it could lead to the increased criminalizing of students and an increase in the school to prison pipeline. Please vote to remove the School Resource Officers in our public schools and replace them with restorative justice programs and increased community based counselors.

Sent from my iPhone

Public Comments

From: Deidre Ramos <deidre Ramos 90@yahoo.com>
Sent: Monday, June 15, 2020 4:48 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: Public Demands For The School Department of New Bedford

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the New Bedford Public Schools. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

To whom it may concern, My name is Deidre Ramos from 154 Ash Street and I demand that New Bedford Public Schools cease the use of School Resource

Officers in our schools, institute a well resourced restorative practice/justice program and work to dramatically reduce the use of suspensions in the city's schools. Although we approve of police officers familiarizing themselves with school layouts during non-school hours to train on entering and exiting school buildings in the event of emergencies, we are opposed to the housing of police officers within schools permanently. Recent history and research has proven that school safety has not improved with the use and housing of permanent SROs. Many students feel unsafe in the presence of police officers especially during the country's current exposure and response to police brutality. This is a local, statewide, and national problem and schools in both Providence and Minneapolis have responded to the issue by terminating their contracts with police departments. The school system in New Bedford, MA should cease the use of SROs in our schools. We should make regular use of surveys and focus group interviews to understand

student perspectives on disciplinary structures in their school environments. Students are best positioned to analyze and articulate the flaws of current structures and processes. The school system should also report all suspensions publicly. In addition to the state mandated offenses, the public should be informed of all suspensions in any given academic year. A restorative practice/justice program should also be implemented as an interconnected part of the school culture. The program should be fully funded to

include ongoing professional development for teachers, staff, and student leaders to focus on creating just and equitable learning environments, building and maintaining healthy relationships and healing harm and transforming conflict. All faculty should be trained to better suit diverse and low income students rather than resorting to disciplinary action as a response to students displaying high amounts of stress and anxiety from experiences outside of school. The school system should also update dress codes and educate their faculty on early development in young women and men to remove biases against different body types that lead to students being targeted. Police officers and disciplinary measures in our schools and disciplinary measures can trigger anxiety in many of our students. Moreover it could lead to the increased criminalizing of students and an increase in the school to prison pipeline. Please vote to remove the School Resource Officers in our public schools and replace them with restorative justice programs and increased community based counselors.

[Sent from Yahoo Mail on Android](#)

Public Comments

From: Alexia DaSilva <arayofsunshine321@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, June 15, 2020 5:41 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: Public Demands For The School Department of New Bedford

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the New Bedford Public Schools. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

To whom it may concern, My name is [Alexia DaSilva from [45 Susan St. Apt 2E South D/City/State] and I demand that New Bedford Public Schools cease the use of School Resource Officers in our schools, institute a well resourced restorative practice/justice program and work to dramatically reduce the use of suspensions in the city's schools – Although we approve of police officers familiarizing themselves with school layouts during non-school hours to train on entering and exiting school buildings in the event of emergencies, we are opposed to the housing of police officers within schools permanently. Recent history and research has proven that school safety has not improved with the use and housing of permanent SROs. Many students feel unsafe in the presence of police officers especially during the country's current exposure and response to police brutality. This is a local, statewide, and national problem and schools in both Providence and Minneapolis have responded to the issue by terminating their contracts with police departments. The school system in New Bedford, MA should cease the use of SROs in our schools. We should make regular use of surveys and focus group interviews to understand student perspectives on disciplinary structures in their school environments. Students are best positioned to analyze and articulate the flaws of current structures and processes. The school system should also report all suspensions publicly. In addition to the state mandated offenses, the public should be informed of all suspensions in any given academic year. A restorative practice/justice program should also be implemented as an interconnected part of the school culture. The program should be fully funded to include ongoing professional development for teachers, staff, and student leaders to focus on creating just and equitable learning environments, building and maintaining healthy relationships and healing harm and transforming conflict. All faculty should be trained to better suit diverse and low income students rather than resorting to disciplinary action as a response to students displaying high amounts of stress and anxiety from experiences outside of school. The school system should also update dress codes and educate their faculty on early development in young women and men to remove biases against different body types that lead to students being targeted. Police officers and disciplinary measures in our schools and disciplinary measures can trigger anxiety in many of our students. Moreover it could lead to the increased criminalizing of students and an increase in the school to prison pipeline. Please vote to remove the School Resource Officers in our public schools and replace them with restorative justice programs and increased community based counselors.

Public Comments

From: Sarah Medeiros <smedeiros722@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, June 15, 2020 3:58 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: Subject: School Committee Comment

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the New Bedford Public Schools. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Hello,

I am an educator in New Bedford. With school resource officers and the budget being on the agenda for today's meeting, I had some thoughts I wanted to share. I am deeply concerned that as a district we are not doing what is best for our Black students. School should be a safe space for our students to learn and grow academically, behaviorally and socially. It is not the school's job to fix the "gap" that exists between Black students and the police. There is no research to support that police presence in school has any benefit; in fact, there is research to support that police presence in schools can be linked to Black students having lower educational attainment, higher rates of school discipline, etc. I would be happy to gather more research and present this to you if necessary. This is not a personal attack on any of our school resource officers; this is looking at what the research shows will benefit our students. Our Black students, especially during this traumatic time where they are watching the news seeing people have to justify whether or not their "lives matter", need counselors, teachers, extra curricular activities, etc. to help support their mental health and wellbeing. I strongly believe New Bedford Public Schools is headed in the right direction, and during this time I think it is crucial we look at the research and do what is best for our Black students.

Thank you,

Dr. Sarah Medeiros, Ed.D.
New Bedford Public Schools
134 Stackhouse Street Dartmouth, MA
774-263-6923

Staff

6

Public Comments

From: Lori Silveira
Sent: Monday, June 15, 2020 3:39 PM
To: Public Comments
Cc: Lori Silveira
Subject: Remove and Replace SROs

Our students need something better.

Let's rethink the presence of police in our buildings.

"The benefits of investing in mental health services are clear: Schools with such services see improved attendance rates, better academic achievement, and higher graduation rates as well as lower rates of suspension, expulsion, and other disciplinary incidents. Data shows that the presence of school-based mental health providers not only improves outcomes for students, but can also improve overall school safety.

By contrast, there is no evidence that increased police presence in schools improves school safety. Indeed, in many cases, it causes harm."

"Police need to maintain a close working relationship with schools, but not directly with the students."

Let's make a New Bedford childhood more healthy.

Thank you for examining the use of police in our schools.

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2020/06/12/defund-school-police-obstacles-to-student-success-column/5336791002/>

Lori Silveira
New Bedford Resident and Teacher
Irwin Jacobs Elementary School
New Bedford, Massachusetts

Find Your SPARK!

Public Comments

From: Ricardo Rosa <ricardorosa1973@yahoo.com>
Sent: Monday, June 15, 2020 4:00 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: Public statement for the school committee meeting - June 15, 2020

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the New Bedford Public Schools. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Greetings member of the committee,

Lately, there's been a great deal of public attention on the presence of police officers in schools. Police or SRO presence in our schools is now a norm rather than the exception. In many affluent communities, the reverse is true. It is disturbing, to say the least, to drive by the high school and the middle schools and to see the most what has become the most dominant visible symbol of current day schooling - a police cruiser. I submit this statement, on behalf of the New Bedford Coalition to Save Our Schools, in advocacy of the total dismantling of the SRO program in our schools. Until legislation is altered, the school committee should reduce SRO's to one point person who serves the district as a whole. Given a police shooting in 2012 of 15-year old Malcolm Gracia and countless testimonies of young people's interaction with the "gang unit," we feel that police presence in schools is traumatizing to countless young people.

We know that there are SROs who are effective in dealing with establishing connections with youths. The reality is that this is not what they are really trained for. Even if countless hours were spent in these "trainings" we don't want people with weapons in school buildings forging these connections. Although we approve of police officers familiarizing themselves with school layout during non-school hours as a way to train on entering and exiting school buildings in the event of emergencies, we are opposed to the housing of police officers within schools permanently. Permanently placing officers in schools means disciplinary situations that should be handled by teachers and administrators can easily escalate and lead to an arrest. Social, psychological and academic problems can easily devolve in a criminal justice problem given their presence. We do not want student to be socialized to police presence in their lives, particularly given the horrific stories of encounters throughout the country.

The school system should move to more deeply fund the school adjustment counseling program, counselors, home-school liaisons, culturally competent social workers, nurses, and specialized programs allowing for mentorship and positive youth development. Restorative or transformative justice programs is also a viable alternative to police presence. Of course, it must be well resourced and implemented throughout the school culture. A strong restorative justice program can establish a culture of accountability and interrupt youth arrests and suspensions. The program can also function in parallel to community peace rooms staffed by parents and volunteers adequately equipped in conflict resolution.

The NBCSOS will be launching a series of webinars starting next week with prominent scholars who study this issue. All members of the committee will receive an invitation. We encourage you to attend and to take action eliminate officers from our schools.

Ricardo Rosa
Co-Chair of the Coalition
36 Cindy Ln.
New Bedford, MA

Public Comments

From: cebusch <cebusch@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, June 15, 2020 2:59 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: Public Comment - 15 Jun 2020 Meeting - Remove SROs from NBPS

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the New Bedford Public Schools. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Name: Cara Busch
Address: 26 Milford St, New Bedford, MA 02745
Subject: Remove SROs from Schools

Dear School Committee Members,

School Resource Officers (SROs) are one of many pillars of institutional racism in the United States. **They criminalize black children and must be removed immediately from New Bedford Public Schools.** The data has shown for years that black students are more than 3 times as likely to be arrested at school than white students. And, they are more than 2 times as likely to be arrested at school. While police are in schools, they are leveraged for minor discipline issues(1). Students funneled into this school-to-prison pipeline are not given the humanity or services they deserve and that their white, suburban peers receive as an American birthright.

SROs are one of many pillars of institutional racism in the United States. **They are a waste of educational funds and must be removed immediately from New Bedford Public Schools.** Based on the documentation available online, it appears that New Bedford spent at least \$575,000 on SROs in FY19. That's more than was devoted to Fine Arts, Elementary After School, or PhysEd/HealthEd/Athletics. Are our schools so well funded that all our students are soaring past educational benchmarks? Is the budget so rich that we have enough counselors to support our students' emotional needs and future goals? Are there overflowing rivers of money that teachers are using, instead of their own cash, to buy all the supplies they need to do their jobs? No? Then the great news for us is that we've identified a line item that was already detrimental to our students. Now cut it.

School Resource Officers are one of many pillars of institutional racism in the United States, and so they must be removed immediately from New Bedford Public Schools. It is not enough for our community institutions to merely attempt to be not racist. It is not enough to make a statement. It is not enough to kneel. It is not enough to point to a mural of Frederick Douglass. It is not enough to applaud the diversity of our community. It is not enough to say Black Lives Matter. We have to mean it. We have to do it. And we have to do it now. De-policing New Bedford Public Schools is the lowest-of-low hanging anti-racism fruit. If SROs want to work for our students, there are more than 50 open positions for them apply to (3).

Best,
Cara Busch

P.S. This method of public comment is disappointing. The Covid-19 pandemic should not be an excuse to exclude the public from directly listening in on school committee meetings and engaging in true public comment. Please open the videoconference line to the public. For this meeting, I hope all public comment emails are published in the meeting minutes.

Public Comments

From: Lori Silveira
Sent: Monday, June 15, 2020 3:39 PM
To: Public Comments
Cc: Lori Silveira
Subject: Remove and Replace SROs

Our students need something better.

Let's rethink the presence of police in our buildings.

"The benefits of investing in mental health services are clear: Schools with such services see improved attendance rates, better academic achievement, and higher graduation rates as well as lower rates of suspension, expulsion, and other disciplinary incidents. Data shows that the presence of school-based mental health providers not only improves outcomes for students, but can also improve overall school safety.

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"Police need to maintain a close working relationship with schools, but not directly with the students."

**Let's make a New Bedford childhood more healthy.
Thank you for examining the use of police in our schools.**

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2020/06/12/defund-school-police-obstacles-to-student-success-column/5336791002/>

Lori Silveira
New Bedford Resident and Teacher
Irwin Jacobs Elementary School
New Bedford, Massachusetts

Find Your SPARK!

Public Comments

From: Sarah Medeiros <smedeiros722@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, June 15, 2020 3:58 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: Subject: School Committee Comment

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Thank you,

Dr. Sarah Medeiros, Ed.D.
New Bedford Public Schools
134 Stackhouse Street Dartmouth, MA
774-263-6923

Public Comments

From: Joseph Chagnon
Sent: Sunday, July 12, 2020 10:51 PM
To: Public Comments
Cc: Thomas Anderson; Sandra Ford
Subject: Public Comments - Budget

Dear New Bedford School Committee:

My name is Joe Chagnon and I am a school psychologist within the New Bedford Public Schools. I am writing with regard to budgetary concerns as they pertain to social-emotional and mental health services for our students. The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) currently recommends a school psychologist-to-student ratio of 1 psychologist for every 500-700 students. Given these guidelines, the district should have approximately 18-20 psychologists. NBPS is currently budgeted for only 9 positions. When all positions are filled (which has not been the case for several years), we have a ratio of only 1 psychologist for about every 1,450 students, or about half of what is nationally recommended. This shortage of positions has directly led to a variety of problematic situations as it relates to our ability to effectively service the needs of students in our district, including the following:

1. Each psychologist is assigned to an average of 3 schools, severely limiting the amount of time we are able to spend in each school assisting with problem-solving, becoming a part of the school community, and interacting directly with students.
2. Our roles are limited to only completing special education evaluations. However, this is just one of a vast variety of skills and services we are trained to do in graduate school, including individual and group counseling, whole-class lessons, data management, academic interventions, behavioral interventions, staff and family consultation, and family education, among others. We are seen only as being evaluators, and the low number of staff makes it very difficult to expand into so many of the other roles we were trained to take on.
3. Retention of staff - school psychologists frequently leave the district due to the overly high testing caseloads and the inability to focus on activities other than testing. New graduates do not want to work in our district because their training is so diversified and they do not want to be in a position where all they can do is test.
4. When a school psychologist is out sick or on leave, the rest are expected to take over their caseloads, which leads to each of us being in more than 3 schools, being past legal timelines (and thus being out of legal compliance) in our evaluations, and spread even further; other positions do not have to do this and are allowed to focus only on their own assigned schools.

Given the current state of education and social climate in the district and throughout the state and the country, school psychologists are needed now more than ever to provide the full range of mental health services that they are trained for. We are not currently able to do so due to the extremely limited number of budgeted positions in the district. We are tied to one single aspect of the role of school psychologists, and are viewed more as psychometricians or “just evaluators” than as psychologists, at the expense of the all of the other services we are fully trained to provide to students, families and staff. I strongly urge this Committee to consider adding additional school psychologist positions in the nearest future possible in order to better serve our students and community. We are drastically underutilized with regard to the skills and training we have, and our current climate requires we be “all hands on deck” with regard to the social and emotional needs of our students. This is a role that the school psychologist was designed to fill, but we are not

currently able to do so due to the number of positions we are allotted.

Respectfully submitted,

Joseph Chagnon

School Psychologist, New Bedford Public Schools

591 Willett Ave., Riverside, RI 02915